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THE LIFE OF CHRIST.

CHAPTER I.

BIRTH AND INFANCY.

1. **SOURCES OF THE HISTORY.** As the Apostle John brings his Gospel to its close, he tells his readers what his object is in writing of the mighty works of his Lord. "These are written," he says, "that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that, believing, ye might have life through His name" (John xx. 31). We are to study the earthly life of Him who came from God to reveal the Father to us and to be the world's Redeemer. May we so study it as to see the glory of the only-begotten Son of God in Jesus, and find eternal life in knowing Him. It is to the Gospels we must turn if we wish to understand what He was and did and taught on earth. There are a few notices of Him in other ancient books; for example, in the writings of the Jewish historian Josephus, and in the works of Roman authors who wrote in the first century of the Christian era, or early in the second. But these notices are so uncertain or so scanty that little can be made of them. The other books of the New Testament, again, give us much that is of priceless value in confirming what the Gospels tell us. The Epistles, especially those of Paul, and the Acts of the Apostles, touch on various points in His life, and dwell largely on His sufferings, death, and resurrection. The last-named book, too,

contains a special narrative of His ascension (Acts i. 1-11), and records a saying of His which is not found in express terms elsewhere (ch. xx. 35). But it is only those matchless books which are known as the four Gospels that furnish anything like a full and connected narrative. These, therefore, are the subjects of our reverent study.

2. CHARACTERISTICS OF THE GOSPELS. Even the Gospels, however, do not profess to give a complete history of the life of Jesus. One of them tells us twice over that it reports only some of His many works and words (John xx. 30; xxi. 25). Neither do they follow one and the same plan. They do what is much better. They offer four distinct and vivid pictures of the One Perfect Life. It is well to notice, therefore, how these four holy histories are distinguished from each other. The first is by one of the Twelve Apostles, Matthew the publican, a man accustomed to business. He delights to bring things together which are of kindred nature, although they may belong to different times. So he gives us miracles in a series, as in chapters viii. ix.; and parables in a group, as in chapter xiii. His Gospel is meant, in the first instance, for Hebrews. It makes large use of the Old Testament, and shows how Prophecy was fulfilled in Jesus. It presents Him as the Son of David, the Son of Abraham, the Messiah of Israel. The second comes from Mark, probably the John Mark whose mother Mary had a house in Jerusalem (Acts xii. 12), and of whom we read that he was cousin (rather than "sister's son") to Barnabas (Col. iv. 10), and accompanied Paul on one of his missionary tours (Acts xiii. 5). It is not by an Apostle, but by one who, as we have reason to believe, was the companion of Peter. It is the Gospel for the Romans, and is remarkable for its graphic narrative. It often gives details which are omitted in the other Gospels, as in the case of the healing of the paralytic (ch. ii. 3-12), and others of

the miracles. It mentions minor incidents and introduces touches which add greatly to the power and pathos of many passages in our Lord's history. It is Mark who notices, for example, that when Jesus blessed the young children, He *took them up in His arms* (ch. x. 16). It is Mark, too, who upon several occasions records the words of Jesus as they were spoken in the mother-tongue: the *Talitha-cumi* addressed to the daughter of Jairus (ch. v. 41); the *Ephphatha* with which He cured the deaf-mute (ch. vii. 34); the *Abba* with which He called on His Father in the agony of Gethsemane (ch. xiv. 36). He sets Jesus before us in His majesty as the Son of God, to whom all power belongs. The third Gospel also is not by an Apostle, but by one who was closely associated with Paul—viz., Luke, the physician of Antioch, a man of education and of wide sympathies. His is the Gospel for the Greeks. It claims to give an orderly narrative (ch. i. 3). It often mentions the things which gave occasion to particular acts or discourses of our Lord. It explains, for example, how He was led to speak the parables of the creditor with the two debtors (ch. vii. 41, &c.), the good Samaritan (ch. x. 30, &c.), the rich man (ch. xii. 16, &c.), the pounds (ch. xix. 11, &c.). It presents Jesus as the Friend of all men, the Redeemer of humanity as such, and so it carries His genealogy beyond the Jewish stock to Adam. The fourth gospel is by John, another of the original Twelve, and the beloved disciple who leaned on the bosom of Jesus. It differs so much in plan and in general character from the others, that these are called by a common name, the three *Synoptists* or *Synoptical Gospels* (from a Greek term, which means *seeing together*), while this one stands quite by itself. It is the deepest of the four in point of matter, while simple in style. It delights to record the wonderful discourses of Jesus, and to exhibit Him as the Word of God, the Teacher who spake as never

man spake. It is the distinctively spiritual and theological Gospel. It sets Jesus forth in His Divine claims, in His Divine nature, and in the glory which belongs to Him as the Son of God in the flesh. So, by following each its own plan, and making its own selection out of the many things which might have been recorded, the Gospels give us not one view but four views of Jesus, and help us to a better understanding of that Holy Life which yet has so much in it that passes knowledge.

3. THE LORD'S MOTHER AND HER ESPOUSALS.—(Matth. i. 18-25 ; Luke i. 26-40, 46-56).—“When the fulness of the time was come,” says Paul, “God sent forth His Son made of a woman” (Gal. iv. 4). She of whom this is spoken was a humble maiden, belonging to Palestine, the *Holy Land* as it is called by one of the prophets (Zech. ii. 12), a small country, only about the size of Wales, thrust in between the great kingdom of Egypt on the one hand and the vast Oriental empires of Babylon and Assyria on the other. The maiden’s name was Mary, and when she first comes before us in the Gospels she is already betrothed to a man of the same place, Joseph by name, of like lowly condition, a carpenter by trade (Matth. xiii. 55). Little is told us of Joseph, whose wife she became in due time according to Jewish custom. The last distinct mention made of him as taking part in the events of the history is in Luke’s account of the scene in the Temple, when Jesus was twelve years old (ch. ii. 48, &c.), and it is supposed that he did not long survive that incident. Nothing is told us of Mary’s own life before the time of her espousals to Joseph, nor is any very prominent place given to her in the Gospels. But what we do see of her shows that she was a woman of rare and beautiful character. The Gospels nowhere claim for her perfect faultlessness. On the contrary, as in the case of the rebuke at the marriage in Cana (John ii. 4), they give us to understand that

she was not wholly free from the common infirmities of human nature. But her piety, her purity, her meek humility, her wonderful faith, are on all occasions made so clear to us that we can understand in some measure how fit she was to be chosen for the honour which has made her "blessed among women." Luke tells us how the announcement that she was to be the mother of the Lord was conveyed to her by God through the angel Gabriel, and in what spirit she received it (ch. i. 26-38); how she visited her cousin Elizabeth in the hill country of Judea (ch. i. 39, 40), and how she poured forth her soul in the song, so beautifully expressing her faith, which has been treasured ever since by the Church of Christ as the *Magnificat* (ch. i. 46-55). From Matthew (ch. i. 20-24) we learn how intimation of the same fact was made to Joseph in a dream. The Gospels further tell us that Mary's first-born son was, in a sense that can be said of no other, the Son of God, descending from her in an extraordinary way, with a humanity prepared for Him by the Holy Ghost, so that from His very birth He was holy and without taint of sin. And as they unfold the history of His life, step by step, they show us that, as He was supernaturally born, so He continued all through His years to be "holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners" (Heb. vii. 26), His enemies not venturing, even when challenged by Him, to convict Him of any sin (John viii. 46).

4. THE PLACE WHERE MARY RESIDED (Luke i. 26). The northernmost of the three main territories into which Palestine was then divided was Galilee, a land of mountain, and lake, and river, inhabited by a people who were rougher, but at the same time simpler, and more open to new impressions, than their brethren in Judæa. This narrow territory is made consecrated soil for ever by the fact that Joseph and Mary belonged to it, and that it was the scene of the larger part of our Lord's life, where He

spent His early years and wrought His first miracle. The place of Mary's residence was Nazareth, a small town in the territory of Zebulon, charmingly built on the hill-side. Its beauty has been described in glowing terms by travellers. "Nazareth is a rose," says an old writer, "and, like a rose, has the same rounded form, enclosed by mountains, as the flower by its leaves." It was not well reputed, however, in those days. It was such a place that Nathaniel could ask—'Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth?' (John i. 46). Incidents like that recorded in Luke iv. 16-29, show us how rough the people were. The land of Galilee, nevertheless, was the subject of prophecy. Isaiah (ch. ix. 1, 2) spoke of the great light that its people were to see. And, though Nazareth itself is not mentioned by name in the Old Testament, Matthew sees a fulfilment of prophecy in the fact that Jesus was a Nazarene (ch. ii. 23).

5. THE PLACE WHERE JESUS WAS BORN. (Matthew ii. 1; Luke ii. 1-5). It was not the Divine purpose, however, that the place of Mary's residence should be the birth-place of Jesus. The prophet Micah (ch. v. 2) had pointed to Bethlehem as destined, though little among the thousands of Judah, to send forth one who was to be ruler in Israel, and in this small town of Judæa, a short way south of Jerusalem, dear to the heart of the Israelite as the town of Boaz and Ruth, of Jesse also and his royal son David, Jesus was born. It came about thus :—The master of the world in those days was Augustus Cæsar, the first of the Emperors of Rome. He ordered the taking of a census or enrolment of the people of his vast dominions with a view to taxation. The Holy Land, though nominally independent, and under the sway of a king of its own, Herod the Great, was already really subject to Rome, and thus it was affected, like other parts of the empire, by the decree of Augustus.

This led to Joseph's going up along with Mary from Nazareth to Bethlehem. The Jews were registered, not where they happened to be residing at the time, but in the place to which their families originally belonged. Joseph belonged by descent to David's family, and hence his journey to Bethlehem, David's city. This took place, Luke tells us, when Cyrenius was governor of Syria (ch. ii. 2). Great difficulty has been felt about this note of time, because it seemed to conflict with a fact gathered from other sources, viz., that Cyrenius or Quirinius, was governor some ten years later than this. But it is now made very probable that he was governor twice, and that this enrolment which was probably preliminary to the actual taxation, took place during his first period of office.

6. CIRCUMSTANCES OF THE BIRTH OF JESUS (Luke ii. 6, 7). Travelling, as persons in their position had to do, it would take Joseph and Mary probably four days to get from Nazareth to Bethlehem. It was no doubt a trying journey, all the more that it seems to have been in the "winter wild." When at length the weary couple reached the shelter of the town, they found it crowded with people who had been drawn to it by the same necessity. Earlier comers had secured the scanty accommodation offered by the inn. A Jewish khan or inn, in a small place like Bethlehem, must have been a very humble and comfortless place. Judging from what is still found in the East, it would be a square enclosure, probably a single storey high, roughly built, and with a raised portion at one end. Within the open square the cattle were secured, and on the elevated part there would be found a recess, or several such, which formed some small rooms. In these rude rooms, which had neither furniture nor front wall, travellers were lodged. But as even this poor comfort was denied to Joseph and Mary, they had to content themselves with some corner in

the space given up to the cattle. Here Jesus was born, wrapped in swaddling clothes, and laid in a manger. In such lowly fashion did He come among His own. There is a very ancient and constant tradition that the place of His birth was a cave. The New Testament nowhere names it so. Yet as Jewish inns were often constructed, in whole or in part, out of the numerous caves which existed in the limestone of districts like that in which Bethlehem lay, it is quite possible that the tradition rests on fact.

7. PREPARATIONS AND SIGNS (Luke i. 5-25, 57-80). The event which took place under these humble circumstances in David's town, was the central event in the history of our world. It came without noise or portent to compel the world's attention. Yet it was no accidental event, but one long prepared for by God. There had been a preparation for it through the providence of God among the Gentiles, and ancient writers bear witness to the fact that at this very time there was a strange feeling in the heathen world, a "tremor of expectation," especially in the East, as if the advent of a universal Ruler were felt to be near. There had been more distinct preparations for it among the elect people to whom God had made special revelations of His will. The law of Israel had looked to it. It had been the burden of the great prophecies which for ages had been the hope and stay of Israel, as they set forth from time to time the prospect of a Messiah who was to be King, Priest, Prophet like unto Moses, Servant and Son of Jehovah. There were devout souls in Israel now anxiously waiting the great fulfilment. Now, too, there had been a special sign of the near performance of the Divine promise in the birth of another child, who was to be the Lord's forerunner, and in whom Malachi's word was to be made good, which spoke of the messenger sent by the Lord to prepare the way

before Him (ch. iii. 1). So the Evangelist Luke, before he gives the story of the birth of Jesus, tells us at some length how a son was born under uncommon circumstances to another devout Jewish couple, the priest Zacharias and Elizabeth his wife, one of the daughters of Aaron ; how the father was led to give him the name John, and how he recognised in this son one who should be the Prophet of the Highest.

8. DATE OF THE NATIVITY (Matthew ii. 1 ; Luke iii. 1, 2, 23). The New Testament, as we have seen, speaks of the birth of Jesus as taking place in the "fulness of the time." This means that it was the event which filled up the period of waiting, and completed the long preparation by which, through the deepening sense of need, the education of the conscience of the nations, the use of sign and symbol, the severe discipline of the Mosaic Law, and the gracious word of prophecy, God had been training both Gentile and Jew. It has created a new era in the history of the world—the Christian era, by which we reckon dates. Yet its own date is by no means certain. This is due to the fact that the New Testament does not distinctly specify either day, season, or year, but leaves us to infer all from a few circumstances which it does notice. It is sufficiently clear, however, that Jesus was not born in the year which now marks the first of the Christian era. The 754th year from the foundation of the city of Rome was fixed on long ago as the first year of our era. But this was a mistake. For we know that Herod the Great, in whose time Jesus was born, died in the 750th year from the foundation of Rome. It is most probable, therefore, that the birth of Jesus took place in the beginning of that year or in the end of the year preceding, and so about four years before the year which has come to be recognised as A.D. 1, or the beginning of our era. As to the particular month and day, tradition names the 25th December. It is possible that

this tradition is right. Various things, however, are urged against it. It is questioned, for example, whether the flocks would be out at night so late in the year, and whether a sufficient time is left for all the events which the Gospels report to have happened before Herod's death. For the visit of the wise men, the presentation in the Temple, the flight into Egypt, the sojourn there, and the return, would then all fall within a space of about three months. It is safest, therefore, to say that in all probability the birth of Jesus took place somewhere between December of the year 749 of the city of Rome and April of the year 750, *i.e.* between December of B.C. 5 and April of B.C. 4.

9. THE ROYAL LINEAGE.—(Matthew i. 1-17; Luke iii. 23-38).—The Babe who came into the world under these humble conditions was to be Israel's King. The New Testament therefore affirms His royal descent. In terms like those of Isaiah xi. 1, prophecy had distinctly pointed to a descendant of David's kingly house as the promised Messiah. So Paul declares Jesus to have been of the seed of David according to the flesh (Rom. i. 3), and two of the Evangelists are careful to show how the Davidic descent was established by those family records to which the Jews attached great importance. Matthew begins with what he terms "the book of the generation," or pedigree, "of Jesus Christ, the Son of David," and traces it back to Abraham. Immediately before he begins the narrative of our Lord's public ministry, Luke introduces a similar table of descent, and carries it back to Adam and to God. There are remarkable differences between the two genealogies, which have been explained in several ways. Some, for example, take the one to be the genealogy of Joseph, and the other that of Mary. But most now look upon both tables as giving the lineage of Joseph, and account for the differences in the names by supposing

that Matthew records the *legal* descent and *royal* succession, and Luke the direct, *personal* descent of Joseph. That Joseph belonged to the house of David, once so glorious and now fallen so low, is clearly stated also in such passages as Matthew i. 20, Luke ii. 4. As to Mary herself, the New Testament nowhere says expressly that she belonged to the same line, but it seems to be implied in such passages as Luke i. 32, Acts ii. 30, xiii. 23.

10. THE SHEPHERDS (Luke ii. 8-20). The entrance of the Saviour into the world was made in a fashion too simple and obscure to arrest the attention of the careless world, or of the nation of Israel, or even of the multitude that filled the town in which it took place. Unnoticed by those whose eyes beheld it on earth, it was not unregarded, however, in heaven. Nor was it utterly without recognition in Israel. In words which are like sweetest music to Christian ears, Luke tells us how the interest of the heavenly world was expressed in the event, and how its meaning was revealed to some chosen souls. These were shepherds, plain and simple men, whose life had fitted them for receiving things which could not be discerned by unprepared minds. As they kept their patient watch over their flocks through the hours of a winter's night on the fields near Bethlehem—the very fields, perchance, where Ruth had reaped and Jesse's ruddy son had followed the ewes—a sudden glory in the skies dazzled their eyes, and an angel voice broke upon their ears, quick as they were to catch the sounds of solitude. It spake of the birth of the Saviour in David's town, and gave a sign by which they might find Him. Nor did the voice that brought the "good tidings of great joy" speak alone. Instantly it was joined by a heavenly choir chanting the praises of God. The hymn which they sang has become consecrated to the Church of Christ, as the *Glory*. It sang of what the birth in David's city was to bring at once

to God on high and to men on earth—"Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, goodwill toward men," or, as the Revised Version renders it, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace *among men in whom He is well pleased*," that is, among men who are thus made the objects of God's gracious favour or good pleasure. These voices fell only on the shepherds' ears : but there they fell on obedient ears. The men hasted to make proof of the mysterious sign, and found the Babe in the manger in the humble inn. They became the first preachers, too, of the fulfilment of God's promise. They spake of the things which they had seen and heard, to the wonder of those around them, and to the thoughtful joy of Mary herself, and left the sacred scene glorifying the God of Israel.

11. THE CIRCUMCISION, PURIFICATION, AND PRESENTATION (Luke ii. 21-24).—When a week had gone by the Child was circumcised. Being born a Jew, He was born subject to the Jewish law, and that law prescribed that every male child should be circumcised on the eighth day (Lev. xii. 3). But the rite was older than the Mosaic law itself. For it was a part of the covenant which God made with Abraham (Gen. xvii. 10-14). It was a token of what that covenant meant in privilege and duty. In connection with this He openly received the name which had been destined for Him by God, the name *Jesus*, corresponding to the *Joshua* of the Old Testament, and meaning "Jehovah Salvation," or "whose salvation is Jehovah." It indicated, as Matthew (ch. i. 21) tells us, that He should "save His people from their sins." About a month thereafter another requirement of the Jewish law had to be attended to. A Jewish mother had still to remain apart for a space of thirty-three days after the circumcision of her boy. At the end of that period she was held to be legally purified, and had to present certain offerings at the sanctuary. These were

a lamb of the first year for a burnt-offering, and a young pigeon or a turtle-dove for a sin-offering. But when the parents were too poor to offer the lamb, it was provided that a second pigeon or turtle-dove should suffice (Lev. xii. 8). It was only the offering of the poor that Mary could afford. But in going up to the Temple she went not only to offer these gifts, but to present the Babe Himself, and to pay a certain sum for Him. For it was also prescribed by the law, that first-born sons should be presented to the Lord, and redeemed from the service of His house. Such sons had been declared *holy* to the Lord, or reserved for His service in the sanctuary, and had to be presented in token that they were His property. This declaration was followed by the choice of the Levites to do the work of God's house. The redemption-money then had to be paid for the excess of the first-born over the number of Levites. But in our Lord's time the first-born had all to be officially released from the obligation to be dedicated to the Temple-service by the payment of five shekels of the sanctuary (Exod. xiii. 1-2 ; Numb. iii. 12, 44, 51 ; xviii. 15, 16). In presenting the Babe Mary gave Him over to God as His own, and received Him back on offering the Temple-charges.

12. THE RECOGNITION IN THE TEMPLE
(Luke ii. 25-39). The Holy Child did not enter His Father's house wholly unobserved and unhonoured. Among the "just and devout" souls who frequented the temple waiting for the coming of the promised Consolation of Israel, there were two, to whom things unseen by the crowds about the holy place were revealed. One of these was an aged Israelite, Simeon by name, of whom nothing is told beyond what Luke relates so briefly here. Led by the Spirit of God, he recognised in the Babe whom Mary brought into the temple the Messiah so long expected, and saw in the fact the token of his own

speedy release from the burden of the earthly life. Taking the Infant Messiah in his arms, he blessed God and burst forth into the Swan-song known in the Christian Church from of old as the *Nunc dimittis*, in which he prophesied what the Babe was to be at once to Gentile and to Jew—a “light” for the one and the “glory” of the other. Simeon was “the first prophet,” it has been said, “who declared that the Christ *had* come.” And in words spoken to Mary he further prophesied what the Child should be to many in Israel, how he should Himself be a “sign spoken against,” and how sorrow should come as well as joy to the holy mother. A second witness appeared in one Anna, a prophetess of the tribe of Asher, a very aged woman who, after a married life of seven short years, had had a widowhood of eighty-four years. She, too, entering the temple at the same time, understood what had taken place, and made Him known to trusting souls in the holy city.

13. THE VISIT OF THE WISE MEN (Matth. ii. 1-12). But the Holy Babe was sought and recognised not only by simple shepherds and by prophet and prophetess, but by representatives of a very different class. Strangers from the distant East were seen in Jerusalem, inquiring for the birthplace of the King of the Jews. It is not quite certain to what particular time this visit belongs. It is most probable that it took place after the presentation in the temple. But we do not know exactly how long after. The strangers were of the order of the “wise men” or *Magi*, an order well known in Arabia, Persia, and other parts of the far East. They were famed for their knowledge of many things, and for their insight into the future. They were great students of the heavens, and they had noticed a new star of rare brightness in that part of the sky which was supposed specially to concern Palestine. It is impossible to say with certainty what this star was. Some take it to have been

a purely miraculous sign. Others suppose it to have been an extraordinary meteor or comet, or a passing star such as has been seen in later times to blaze suddenly forth and rapidly disappear. The great and devout astronomer Kepler, made a calculation showing that there was a remarkable conjunction of the planets Jupiter and Saturn, some time before our Lord's birth. But, whatever the star was, these men took it as a sign of the birth of a great King for Judæa, the land ruled by that section of the heavens in which it was seen. They may have been helped to this conclusion by knowing and pondering the prophecy uttered by Balaam, the strange eastern seer, about the star that was to come out of Jacob (Num. xxiv. 17). They travelled from their own land on purpose to discover and worship this King. In Jerusalem they were directed to Bethlehem as the place where, according to prophecy, He was to be born. As they went, the star which they had seen in their own country reappeared, and guided them to where Jesus was with Mary His mother. Entering the house with feelings which none can imagine, they fell down before the Babe and presented their gifts according to Eastern custom, in token that they did obeisance to Him as a Prince.

14. HEROD'S QUEST, DEFEAT, AND REVENGE (Matt. ii. 3-8, 13-18). The fears of the murderous tyrant who then ruled Judæa were roused, and he formed a crafty plan by which to defeat the oracle, if it pointed to a rival to his throne. He consulted his own priests and scribes regarding the place where the King of the Jews should be born, and the wise men themselves regarding the time when the star had appeared. He then sent the latter away with instructions to return and report the finding of the Babe to him, on the pretext that he wished to go and worship Him. He thought that, when he had all in hand, he could rid himself of all possible danger by slaying the strange child. But

the wise men, receiving Divine warning, made their way towards their own country without coming again by Jerusalem. In a frenzy of passion, Herod took steps by which he imagined he should make it impossible that the Babe could escape him, notwithstanding the defeat of his crafty scheme by the wise men. He gave orders for the slaughter of all the male children in Bethlehem and its neighbourhood from two years old and under. The act was in keeping with the character of the man. History tells us that, among other atrocities of which he was guilty, he murdered his own wife and two of his sons, and that on his death-bed he gave secret orders for the slaughter of the best men of the land in order that his decease might not be without mourning. The Evangelist describes the sorrow of the stricken mothers in Bethlehem in the pathetic words in which Jeremiah had spoken of the woes which the chosen people had to suffer from heathen invaders. Bethlehem had been a place of sorrows. Near it Rachel, the mother of the tribes of Ephraim, Manasseh, and Benjamin had died (Gen. xxxv. 19). And here the mourning town is described by a bold figure as if it were Rachel herself grieving over her lost children. But the ruthless cruelty of Herod missed its mark. Warned of God in a dream, Joseph fled with the mother and the Babe into Egypt, where they dwelt beyond the tyrant's reach until his miserable death.

POINTS FOR FURTHER INQUIRY.

1. *What is meant by the “Wilderness of Judæa?”*
2. *The kind of Messiah expected by the Jews of our Lord’s time?*
3. *How the Greek people and the Roman people helped in different ways the coming of “the fulness of the time?”*
4. *The points at which the two genealogies diverge, and the principle on which that of Matthew seems to be constructed?*

5. *The various prophecies pointing to the Messiah as a descendant of David's house?*
 6. *The various Herods noticed in the New Testament?*
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CHAPTER II.

THE YEARS IN NAZARETH.

15. THE RETURN FROM EGYPT: THE GALILEAN HOME (Matt. ii. 19-23; Luke ii. 39, 40). The stay in Egypt was brief, for Herod died a very short time—a few weeks, or at most a few months—after the flight. On the tyrant's death, Joseph was led by the Divine will, as the oppressed fathers of his people had been many centuries ago, to come up out of the land of the Pharaohs. It may have been his intention to return to Bethlehem or that neighbourhood. But learning that Herod had been succeeded by his son Archelaus, and knowing that the son was in many respects as much to be feared as the father, he turned aside, again in obedience to a Divine warning, and sought shelter in the remoter Galilee, which was under the sway of a less truculent ruler, Herod Antipas. So did God order it that the Holy Family should settle again in Nazareth. So was it brought about, too, that this quiet, northern town, built against the fair hillside and set round about with its gardens of fruit trees, became the home of the childhood of Jesus. We long to know what His manner of life was there. But little is told us. We are left to picture Him to ourselves as He moved about in the child's joy and freedom through the streets and groves of the secluded place, or looked out from the heights upon Tabor, and Hermon, and toward the far-off sea, and the other points of the noble prospect which opened out there. We can

picture Mary, too, teaching Him, with more than the usual care of pious Jewish mothers, His first lessons in knowledge, and giving Him, above all, His first instructions in the history of the Israel of God and in the goodly things of the Divine Law. Nor was He without companions in His home. There were brothers and sisters there. The names of the brothers have come down to us: they were James and Joses and Simon and Judas; and the people of the district spoke of having the sisters also among them (Matt. xiii. 55, 56). It is not quite clear in what sense these were brothers and sisters to Jesus—whether full brothers and sisters, children of Joseph and Mary; or half brothers and sisters, children of Joseph by another marriage; or only cousins, children of Alphaeus and another Mary, a sister of the Lord's mother. But they were there, and daily contact with them meant for Jesus daily familiarity with ordinary human nature. It is clear that these brothers were not in sympathy with Him. For when He grew up and began His ministry, they were not believers in His claims (John vii. 5). They did not all continue, however, in that mind. We know that one of them, namely, James, became the head of the Church in Jerusalem, and another appears to be the writer of the Epistle known as that of Jude. But of Jesus Himself at this early period, it is simply said that He "grew and waxed strong in spirit, and the grace of God was upon Him" (Luke ii. 40). Like other Jewish boys in most respects, He yet differed from all in this, that evil did not show itself in Him as He grew up, but grace appeared in all His life. So, as an old writer has said, "He sanctified youth by passing through it."

16. AT TWELVE YEARS OF AGE (Luke ii. 41-50). It was the custom of the Jews to go up to Jerusalem on occasion of the great festivals. A Jewish boy's twelfth year was also an important

period in his life. He was recognized then as a "Son of the law," capable of taking part in public religious service. When Jesus reached that age, Joseph and Mary took Him with them to Jerusalem at the time of the Passover. This visit to the holy city, and above all what He saw of the Temple, must have been of solemn and absorbing interest to Him. He was reluctant to quit those sacred scenes, and when the parents left the place they failed to notice, in the confusion and bustle of the general departure, that He had tarried behind. They were a day's journey on the way home when they missed Him. They thought at first that He might be somewhere in the company, with friends and kinsfolk who were also returning. But not finding Him here, they had to turn back to Jerusalem, and after three days' separation they came upon Him in the Temple, among the doctors, listening to their expositions of the law, putting questions, and astonishing all by His understanding. With a touch of the reproach which a mother can feel, Mary asked Him why He had caused them this sorrow and anxiety. He met her appeal by the question—"Wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business;" or, as the Revised Version puts it, "In my Father's house?" It was a memorable reply. It showed that He was conscious of a position different from that of those around Him, and of a peculiar relation to God. It meant, too, that He felt His proper place to be in the house of Him whom he recognized to be His true Father, and that His proper interest lay in the things of that Father.

17. THE SILENT PREPARATION (Luke ii. 51-52). This incident in the Temple is recorded at length by reason of its great importance. For it gives us a glimpse into the mystery of His own early consciousness of what He was Himself and what His place should be on earth. But it is the only incident that is so reported out of all that took

place with Him for nearly thirty years. And for the eighteen years which passed between this occurrence and the beginning of His ministry the Gospels preserve almost unbroken silence. They tell us distinctly that, even after those tokens of a higher relationship than the earthly one to Joseph and Mary, He went away with them obediently to the home in Nazareth, and continued to show all filial respect and subjection. They tell us with like distinctness that the beautiful harmony of His life was preserved as he passed from childhood to youth, and from youth to manhood (Luke ii. 52). They give us to understand, too, that He was known simply as the carpenter's son, and even that He toiled at Joseph's humble trade. For while Matthew (ch. xiii. 54) relates how the people, astonished at His teaching, exclaimed, "Is not this the carpenter's son?" Mark keeps note of the fact that they cried out, "Is not this the carpenter?" (ch. vi. 3). We can also gather that He received none of the curious learning of the time, and had no training under any great Rabbi, such as Paul had under Gamaliel. For we are told that "the Jews marvelled, saying, How knoweth this man letters, having never learned?" (John vii. 15). But this is about all that is said of these long years of subjection, obscurity, and silent preparation for the work of His life. It is possible that He may have paid other visits to Jerusalem as the stated feasts came round, and thus had opportunities of seeing to how poor a thing the worship of the true God had sunk, and how religion had become perverted and degraded in the hands of the official classes. But His life was passed mainly, if not entirely, in the Galilean town, in Mary's home, in Joseph's workshop. There He would see more and more what the common life of men was, and what were the power and the mystery of sin. There He would have temptation to meet in many forms, from the rough lives of the townsfolk and from

the infirmities of human nature in the home. There, too, He would have opportunity to sound the needs of men, and to contemplate the plan of His own life. In ways which we cannot reckon or comprehend, those years of privacy were a necessary part of His training, and by many different circumstances and experiences they contributed to perfect Him for His work of mediation. But something yet was needed ere He could show Himself openly to Israel, and take up His Messianic calling. The sign of the fit time must come, and with that, too, a special consecration, a fresh equipment, a severer discipline.

18. THE FORERUNNER (Matt. iii. 1-12; Mark i. 1-8; Luke iii. 1-18). With its last voice Old Testament Prophecy had announced the coming of Elijah before the great and dreadful day of the Lord (Mal. iv. 5). But Prophecy had been silent for four centuries. At last a voice was heard in the land, speaking like those of old. It was the voice of John, the son of Zacharias and Elizabeth, a second Elijah, a man of simple life and ascetic habit, a Nazarite, who had taken his place by the banks of Jordan, in the wilderness of Judæa, clad in rough attire, and content with desert fare. He had a message for Israel—the message that the kingdom of heaven, the long-expected kingdom of their Messiah, was at hand. He had also a call for Israel—the call to repentance as a preparation for the kingdom. He had a special rite, too, the rite of Baptism, which he administered on the confession of sin, and with a view to forgiveness and to admission into the kingdom. His preaching deeply moved the people, so that men of all classes—publicans and soldiers and others—crowded to hear him, and a religious awakening took place among them. The appearance of John marked so important an epoch that its date is given with uncommon precision (Luke iii. 1, 2). The word of ancient Prophecy, as spoken by Isaiah (ch. xl. 3) and Malachi (ch. iii. 1), seemed fulfilled. The tidings

of what was taking place came to Jesus in His distant home. He saw the sign that the time was at hand for His own appearing before Israel. He left Nazareth, and made His way to where John was baptising at Bethabara (or, as the Revised Version gives it, Bethany), beyond Jordan (John i. 28). The eve of His ministry had come.

19. THE BAPTISM OF JESUS. (Matt. iii. 12-17; Mark i. 9-11; Luke iii. 21-23). It was not enough for Him merely to listen to John or look with joy upon the conversions he was effecting. He desired baptism for Himself. But John was staggered when Jesus approached him for that purpose. He did not as yet realise all that Jesus was. We do not hear, indeed, even of any intercourse of the one with the other during these years. But there was something in the appearance of Jesus, the power of a holy character, the impression that He was one quite apart from the multitudes who flocked to Jordan, which made John draw back and protest that this new comer was more fit to baptise than to be baptised. Yet Jesus prevailed with him so that the rite was administered. He submitted to it because it was an ordinance connected with the preaching of the kingdom of God. As a true Israelite He sought to 'fulfil all righteousness,' that is, to do all that it was right and becoming for an Israelite to do, in the observance of religious ordinances as in all things else. This rite could not be to Him all that it was to others. For He had no sin of his own to confess. Yet it had a distinct significance even for Him. By it He publicly consecrated Himself to the work of the kingdom of God, leaving Nazareth and its quiet occupations and the claims of home behind, and setting His face to the mission for which His Father had sent Him into the world. This act was immediately followed by tokens of His Father's recognition. As He came up out of the waters of the Jordan, He saw the heavens opened and the

Spirit of God descending in dove-like form, and a voice was heard attesting His Divine Sonship and the good pleasure of His Father. Luke, who is always most observant of the prayers of Jesus, tells us that it was when He was 'praying,' filled no doubt with the awe of the occasion and with the thought of what was before Him, that these things happened. They were the Divine consecration by which God responded to the self-consecration which Jesus professed in being baptised. The descent of the Spirit upon Him meant a special equipment for His work, endowing Him with the powers needed for His task. The voice from heaven was the Father's designation of Jesus to His high mission, the seal of His approval, the presentation of Him to the world.

20. THE TEMPTATION (Matt. iv. 1-11 ; Mark i. 12, 13 ; Luke iv. 1-13). Thus the call had now come to Jesus finally and unmistakeably. It came to Him, too, at a time which suited all an Israelite's ideas of entrance on public work of a sacred kind. It was provided by the law that the age at which a Levite should commence official service should be thirty (Numb. iv. 3, 23, 43, 47) ; and Luke tells us that "Jesus himself began to be about thirty years of age" (chap. iii. 23). But before He was completely prepared to take up His ministry in public and proclaim the kingdom of God, one experience had yet to be met and faced. It was the severe experience of temptation. In the long and silent years He had doubtless recognised with ever-growing clearness what He was to God and what He had been sent to do. The little world of Nazareth must also have brought to Him in many ways the knowledge of temptation. Now that all this was in the past, and the work which had been so long in His mind was immediately before Him, and the irresistible call had reached Him, He needed opportunity to commune with Himself and with God on the life and the conflict which were at once to begin. He sought the

solitudes of the desert that He might be at home with the thoughts which moved Him. He did so under an impulse which could not be withstood, an impulse of the Spirit, and one so strong that Mark speaks of it as *driving* Him (chap. i. 12). As Matthew states, too, He was thus "led up of the Spirit" for the express purpose of being tempted. The scene of the temptation is described briefly as "the wilderness." It has been supposed by some to have been the Arabian desert, which was made sacred also by the ministry and the trials of the great prophets, Moses and Elijah. But tradition has fixed upon a place near Jericho, called *Quarantania*, where a rough, precipitous, cave-hollowed hill rises from the plain to the height, it is said, of the rock of Gibraltar. There he tarried forty days, immersed in thought, and insensible to the cravings of hunger. There, too, he had to wrestle with temptation in its sharpest forms. Mark and Luke indicate that He was tempted during these forty days. But Matthew and Luke also report three great onsets of temptation which came upon Him at the close of that period, when hunger assailed him after His protracted fast. John gives no record of these temptations. Mark briefly notices the fact that He was tempted, and that the angels ministered to Him. He also adds a stroke which is not given by the others, but which wonderfully deepens the impression of the Saviour's solitariness. That is the circumstance that He was "with the wild beasts." Matthew and Luke differ as to the order of the three temptations. But the former seems to follow the natural succession of events. In the first the temptation was to distrust His Father and take His case into His own hand; in the second, to convince men of what He was by doing something to dazzle them; in the third, to snatch universal dominion by giving His allegiance to the god of this world. The first was an appeal to

natural appetite ; the second, to His sense of Divine Sonship ; the third, to the love of power. They were assaults pointing to three great types of temptation, such as John means by the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, the pride of life (1 John ii. 16). But they all had this in common, that they were enticements to secure lawful objects by unlawful means. Jesus conquered each of them by the Word of God, taken from the great scenes of Israel's history or from the book of Israel's Psalms. In the first He fell back on the fact, so graciously illustrated in the provision of the manna, that bread is not the only means God has for supporting His children (Deut. viii. 3) ; in the second, on the fact of God's protective care as a restraint alike on fear and on presumption (Ps. xci. 11. ; Deut. vi. 16) ; in the third, on the fundamental principle of the faith of Israel, that God alone is worthy of worship (Deut. vi. 13). There is much in these temptations which is not explained to us, and which we probably could not understand. The Gospels show us, however, that they came through a personal Tempter. It is clear, too, that if Jesus was sinless, they must have risen upon Him not from within His own soul but from without. The question then is, how could they be real temptations, and like our own, if His nature was perfectly pure and there were no motions of evil within him ? To this we can reply that the temptations here recorded were appeals to things which are not evil in themselves, but which may easily be made the occasions of evil. To have the sense of hunger and the desire to satisfy it is not in itself sinful, but to give way to this in faithlessness, is a sin. So far as Jesus had the keen sense of want, and felt the strong impulse of nature to satisfy its pangs at once, He knew the reality and power of the temptation addressed to Him, and resistance meant pain and struggle. So far as He refused to yield to the craving of nature at the cost of His

trust in God, He kept the temptation short of sin. These solicitations were an important part of His own personal equipment for His mission. He was to go among men with the offer of His Father's grace, and it became Him to know men as they were, beaten by temptation and ensnared by sin. They brought him experience of the weakness of human nature and the strength of evil. They brought Him also the precious power of sympathy. So the New Testament speaks of Him as "able to succour them that are tempted," as an High Priest who can be "touched with the feeling of our infirmities," and as learning "obedience by the things which He suffered" (Heb. ii. 18, iv. 15, v. 8). Nor was this the only occasion on which He was grievously tempted. Luke tells us that the devil departed from him now only "for a season."

POINTS FOR FURTHER INQUIRY.

1. *The ordinary education of a Jewish boy.*
 2. *The history of the Temple from Solomon's time.*
 3. *The arguments taken from the New Testament itself in favour of the "brethren" of Jesus being younger sons of Joseph and Mary.*
 4. *The great Jewish Festivals.*
 5. *The idea of the "Kingdom of God" in the Old Testament, and in our Lord's own teaching.*
 6. *How Jesus grew in mind and increased in wisdom.*
 7. *The Temptation of Jesus as handled in the Epistle to the Hebrews.*
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CHAPTER III.

THE FIRST YEAR OF THE MINISTRY.

21. THE WORK, ITS SUBJECTS AND ITS MEANS. Jesus was now fully furnished for the mission of His life. That mission was, as He Him-

self expressed it, to bring the kingdom of God to men. And that was not a kingdom of this world, nor one which came with observation and power, but one within men. The royal things which it offered were not material possessions, but graces which make the life of men's souls, like those of the Beatitudes in the Sermon on the Mount (Matt. v. 3-12), or those of which Paul speaks when he declares "the kingdom of God is not meat and drink, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Ghost" (Rom. xiv. 17). Who were the subjects to whom He had to command this kingdom? He had, to some small extent at least, prepared material to work upon, in devout and expectant souls like Nicodemus and others. But with the most it was miserably the reverse. The mass of the people with whom He had to deal had sunk to all that was of the earth earthy in their ideas of divine things. All that they looked for in the promised kingdom of Messiah was a political supremacy. They were ruled by official classes, like the Scribes, who had degraded God's law, and overlaid His Word with an intolerable weight of men's traditions. They were broken up into parties, each rivalling the other in the perversion of the things of God. There were the *Essenes*, a small body of whom no mention is made in the New Testament, but who seem to have led a rigorous life, apart from all others, practising celibacy, keeping the Sabbath with great strictness, refusing to sacrifice at the Temple, believing in the immortality of the soul, but not in the resurrection of the body, and having various foreign elements in their doctrine and worship. There were also the *Herodians*, a political faction, who held by the reigning house and supported the Roman government, so hateful to the Jews generally, which had given Herod his throne. There were the *Sadducees*, who denied the resurrection and the existence of angel and spirit (Acts xxiii. 8). And opposed to these

free-thinkers or materialists of the time, were the *Pharisees*, or “*Separatists*,” a religious party which aimed at a stricter observance of the law, but had become self-righteous formalists, quibblers about trifles, enemies of spiritual religion. This was what the people of God had sunk to, and these were the men to whom Jesus had to commend Himself as Messiah, Son of God, and Head of a new kingdom of righteousness. What were the means by which they were to be won to Himself and to His kingdom? One of these was His *Teaching*. That was as deep as it was simple, expressed in homely language and figure, but given with authority. By it Jesus sought to revive the spiritual understanding of God’s law, to quicken conscience, to arouse the sense of need, and so to lead men back to God through Himself. A second was *Miracle*, which served as a token of His Divine commission, a call soliciting men’s attention to Him, and a sign of His redeeming power. A third was the simple instrument of free and sympathetic intercourse with men, by which they were brought under the spell of a perfect character and a life of love. But there were also other means, and these the highest, namely His *Death* and *Resurrection*. These last were to be the sources of His mightiest influence over men. Under all circumstances, too, He sought the strength for His work in prayer. How often do the Gospels present Him so engaged with His Father, continuing all night in prayer (Luke vi. 12), praying on the mountain apart (Matt. xiv. 23), in the solitary place (Mark i. 35), in the wilderness (Luke v. 16), in the guest chamber (John xvii. 1), in the garden (Matt. xxvi. 39), on the cross (Luke xxiii. 34)! One of the Epistles helps us to understand what the prayers of Jesus “in the days of His flesh” must have been, when it declares that He offered them up “with strong crying and tears unto him that was able to save him from death” (Heb. v. 7).

22. THE LENGTH OF THE MINISTRY: ITS DIVISIONS.—It is a question of the deepest interest how many years Jesus had for His public ministry. It is a question, however, which is not easy to answer with certainty. It turns mainly upon the number of Passovers mentioned in the Gospels, and especially on the nature of “the feast of the Jews” (whether a Passover or another of the great festivals), which is noticed in John v. 1. The matter is so difficult that some have fixed the length of the ministry at five years, while others reduce it to a single year. But the most probable conclusion is, that it lasted about three years. It may be divided, therefore, into three periods, each about a year long. Our knowledge of the first of these sections is comparatively limited. The scene, however, was largely in Judæa, and Jesus had not as yet attracted extensive public notice. The scene of the second was for the most part in Galilee, and it marked the height of His popularity and His most intense activity. The scene of the third was in Galilee and its neighbourhood for the first six months, and in Peraea, Jerusalem, and elsewhere, for the rest of the time. It was the period of declining favour and deepening hostility.

23. FIRST PUBLIC TESTIMONY TO JESUS (John i. 19-34).—When Jesus left the scene of His temptation He returned to the parts of Jordan where John preached. Here He received the first public testimony to His being the Christ, and it came from the Baptist himself. The occasion of it was the arrival of a deputation of priests and Levites, sent by the leaders of the Jews to ascertain who this John was, the noise of whose work had reached Jerusalem itself. They asked the Baptist whether he was himself the Messiah, or Elijah, or the Prophet promised in the Old Testament (Deut. xviii. 15-18). He claimed to be none of these, but only “the voice of one crying in the wilderness,” according to Isaiah’s

word (ch. xl. 3), and indicated that there was One amongst them to whom he was not worthy to do even the most menial service. He repeated his testimony in a yet higher strain next day, distinctly recognising Jesus as the Lamb of God when he saw Him approach. He had already borne a remarkable witness to Jesus at the time of His baptism (Luke iii. 15-17). We are not clearly told how he was led to that. The impression of holiness and separateness from others which was produced by the very presence of Jesus, doubtless had its own effect on the Baptist. He was deeply moved, too, in all probability by what passed when Jesus sought baptism. For the confession of sin was required of those who were baptized, and Jesus having no sin of His own to acknowledge, may have spoken in a way to excite the conviction that He might be the Messiah. And this conviction was at last fully reached when John saw the Spirit of God descending from heaven like a dove upon Jesus. For that was the sign given by God (John i. 32-34). But now his testimony went beyond all that he had previously said. He proclaimed in Jesus One who was to take away the sin of the world, and to be all that had been prefigured by the lambs of Old Testament sacrifice.

23. THE FIRST DISCIPLES (John i. 35-51.)—The Baptist's testimony had immediate results. It led to the gain of the first disciples of Jesus. These were two of the Baptist's own followers, Andrew and another, who is unnamed, but who for that very reason is in all probability John, the writer of the Fourth Gospel, himself. They were with the Baptist when he saw Jesus walking a day after, and repeated his word—Behold the Lamb of God ! They received it as a call to themselves to leave John, their present master, and join themselves to this greater One. They followed Jesus, and in token of their desire to keep by Him, asked Him where He dwelt. He received them into His house, and conversed

with them, so that they left Him convinced that He was the Messiah. Burning to tell the good news, Andrew went in quest of his brother Simon and brought him to Jesus. Looking at the man and seeing what he was capable of being, Jesus declared that his name should be *Cephas*, a *Stone*. These three simple men of Bethsaida were the very earliest of the Lord's disciples, and they were found for Him in the Jordan valley. They were the first fruits of a goodly harvest. A fourth was added the very next day. Jesus was then about to set forth for Galilee, but ere he left the memorable spot by the Jordan, He came upon another man belonging to Bethsaida, Philip by name, and at once attached him to Himself by His word "Follow Me." It may be that Philip had heard of Jesus as the Messiah from his fellow-townsman, Andrew and Peter. This, however, is the first instance which the gospels record of the direct call from Jesus Himself, and as Andrew had at once become a preacher of Christ to his brother Simon, so Philip at once acted the same part to a friend of his own, and was the means of adding a fifth to the little band of disciples. This friend was Nathanael, a man of Cana, a small town about seven miles north of Nazareth, and to be identified probably with the modern *Kana el Jelil*. He was at first surprised, if not incredulous, when Nazareth, which he knew so well, and which had no place in the ancient prophecies, was named. But yielding to Philip's simple invitation to come and see for himself, he was overcome by the commendation with which Jesus met him, and the knowledge which He had of him. He confessed Him as the true Messias, the Son of God, and the King of Israel, and received, in terms taken from the narrative of Jacob's dream (Gen. xxviii. 12, &c.), the assurance that heaven itself, and all gracious intercourse with God, were opened to him through and by this Son of Man.

24. THE FIRST MIRACLE (John ii. 1-11).—The town which had furnished thus early a disciple of guileless character, soon saw wondrous things done by the hand of Jesus. Three days after Nathanael's call there was a marriage in Cana, in which Mary had some part, and Jesus and His disciples were among the invited guests. As we see from the story of Samson's nuptials (Judges xiv. 17), wedding feasts in these lands were apt to continue a whole week or thereby. In this case the rejoicings went on till the wine was nearly spent. Mary noticed this, and anxious to save the bridegroom from distress, laid the case before Jesus. He set aside her plea even with words of rebuke, because she spoke as if she would hasten His time, and saw not that He had now higher interests to consider than those of the earthly relationships, holy though these were. Yet, in His own way, He met the petition which He seemed to refuse. He bade the servants fill the large water-pots, which stood outside, for ceremonial purposes. When this was done and the water was carried to the president of the wedding feast and he began to draw it off, lo ! it was found to be wine. The supply which Jesus thus provided was exceeding large. For each firkin may have meant nearly nine gallons. But what mostly amazed the president was the quality of the wine. For, whereas it usually became worse as the feast went on, on this occasion the last was the best. By this great work Jesus manifested His glory and elevated the belief of the disciples. It was a witness to His divine commission and a help to imperfect faith. But it was also a "sign"—a picture or token of what He could do for us in making our life a new thing to us in its festal times as well as in its more solemn hours, and so making it a happy thing in all its changeful days. This made it a fitting introduction to the whole train of the miracles. What grace is seen in the fact that the first of the mighty works of Jesus was the simplest,

and that He hallowed a common scene of social gladness with His first official presence ! This “beginning of *signs*,” as John calls the miracles, was the earnest of many more which, all in their several ways, “manifested forth His glory,” and gave witness of the power He possessed, and spoke of the great object of His ministry among men. They were of various kinds, and have been variously classified. They have been divided, for example, into three great groups—namely, miracles on Nature, like this first one ; miracles on Man, as in the healing of lepers, paralytics, and others ; and miracles on the Spirit world, as in the case of the demoniacs. The Gospels give us accounts of nearly forty. But they let us understand also that these are but a select few out of many. For they often refer to others than those which they report at length (Matt. viii. 16, xxi. 14, &c.).

25. FIRST PASSOVER AND PURGING OF THE TEMPLE (John ii. 12-22).—After the miracle at Cana He went down to Capernaum with Mary, His brethren and His disciples. This city must have been a place of importance in our Lord’s time. It was the seat of a collector and a garrison, and had a synagogue built by a Roman centurion. It was the scene of many of Christ’s mighty works, and was so much His home for the three years of His public ministry that it is called His “own city” (Matt. ix. 1). Yet we know singularly little of it. It is one of the three cities on which He pronounced His woes (Matt. xi. 20-23), and it has so completely disappeared that it is little more than a name. Something seems to have been known of it down to the fourth century, but it has been lost sight of since then, overwhelmed no doubt in the desolating invasions of the Arabs. It appears to have been situated on the western side of the Lake of Gennesareth, and towards its northern end. But travellers have suggested several different places as

the precise site, and are still unable to agree. The most likely place is either the modern *Khan Minyeh*, at the northern extremity of the plan of Gennesareth, or a collection of ruins at *Tell Hûm*, about a couple of miles south of the entrance of the Jordan into the Lake. On the present occasion our Lord's stay in Capernaum was but for a few days. The Passover was at hand, and Jesus had the desire of a true Israelite to take part in a festival which commemorated the most glorious event in the ancient history of His people. He went up to Jerusalem, and, as on the occasion of His visit at twelve years of age, so now the Temple was the centre of His thoughts. But the scene which met His eye, when He reached the holy place, fired Him with a righteous wrath. Traders had for a length of time, perhaps ever since the Exile, been allowed a place about the Temple for the sale of the victims required for the sacrifices, for the exchange of foreign money into the sacred shekel, with which alone the Temple dues could be paid, and for other purposes connected with the service of the sanctuary. There was some reason for such an arrangement in the convenience of the worshippers, especially those who came from distant parts. But the liberty had been grossly abused, and the sense of reverence had been lost. The sacred precincts had been turned into a noisy market-place. That part of the Temple which was known as the Court of the Gentiles rang with the chaffering of bargain-makers, the din of cattle, the clamour of greedy commerce. The profanation of the Court was a degradation of the shrine itself. The Father's house had been made a house of merchandise. Jesus, taking a handful of rushes, probably those which lay at His feet for the use of the beasts, made a scourge of them, and drove the cattle forth. He overthrew, too, the money changers' tables, and drove all out of the place which they profaned, leaving not even those who

sold the offerings of the poor, such as His own mother had had to present. There was a power in His holy presence which could not be withstood, either by trader or by Temple official. The Jews could only ask a sign of His authority, and He met their demand by a deep saying about destroying the Temple and raising it up in three days, the meaning of which was not apparent even to His disciples till after His resurrection. This cleansing of the Temple was a witness which none could misunderstand, to the holiness which belonged to the House of God. It was a sign, too, of the radical purification which religion required in Israel, and which He had come to effect. It is recorded only by John. But the other Gospels tell us of another Purgation of the Temple, which took place when His ministry was nearing its close (Matt. xxi. 12; Mark xi. 15; Luke xix. 45). The two instances, while naturally very like, have their points of difference. Nor is it strange that the Saviour should both begin and end His work of reformation and regeneration by an act which spoke so solemnly of the great need of the nation, as well as of His Father's rights and His own prophetic authority.

26. FIRST FRUITS IN JERUSALEM (John ii. 23—iii. 21).—In addition to the cleansing of the Temple, Jesus did miracles in Jerusalem then, which are not reported at length. They made such an impression that many believed. But Jesus, knowing how superficial their convictions were, did not trust Himself to any close connection with them. There was one remarkable exception, however, in the case of a person of rank, Nicodemus by name, belonging to the strait sect of the Pharisees, a teacher of note, and a ‘ruler of the Jews,’ that is probably a member of the great court of the Sanhedrim (more correctly the Sanhedrin), the supreme ecclesiastical council of the nation. This man came to Jesus, timidly indeed, and by night. Yet as he professed his belief

in Him as at least a teacher sent from God, and sought to know more of Him, our Lord saw that he was of a different spirit from the mass. So He spoke to him of the deep things of the Kingdom of Heaven, and the necessity for a change of nature, so complete as to be best compared to a new birth. He spoke to him, too, of the need and the work of the Spirit of God, of Himself as the Son of Man and the Son of God, of His pre-existence in Heaven, and of His destiny to be lifted up in cruel death for the salvation of men. So to this inquirer from the ranks of the hardest sect of the Jews, Jesus discoursed of the great truths which we know as Regeneration, the Incarnation, the Atonement. To this man, too, He spoke the golden words of the New Testament—the words about the love of God in the gift of His only begotten Son. It is but three brief glimpses that we get of Nicodemus. They are in John's Gospel, and each has its own deep interest. It was two and a half years or thereby after this memorable nocturnal interview that he had a second meeting with Jesus. Then our Lord was in danger of murderous injustice, and Nicodemus had the courage to utter at least some words in the presence of his colleagues of the Council in behalf of His right to a trial by law (John vii. 45, &c.). A few months later, after the death of which Jesus spoke in a figure at their first meeting had been endured, Nicodemus came forward to aid Joseph of Arimathea in giving honourable burial to his Lord's body (John xix. 38-42).

27. MINISTRY IN JUDÆA : RENEWED TESTIMONY OF THE BAPTIST (John iii. 22-36).—Leaving Jerusalem after the Passover, Jesus went with His disciples into the rural parts of Judæa. No history is given us of that tour. We cannot decide with sufficient certainty even how long it lasted, whether only a few weeks as some suppose, or some months as most contend. During the same period,

however, the Baptist was carrying on his work at a place called *Aenon*, near to Salim, which may have been in the wilderness of *Judæa*, and not very distant from the scene of the Baptist's work, although its site is far from certain. Both John and Jesus were receiving disciples by baptism. The latter, however, did so only indirectly through His adherents, as we learn from John iv. 1. The ordinance of baptism with which Christ's name was to be connected was not instituted till the close of His stay on earth, and He must have had some special reason for allowing His disciples to baptize at present. It may have been one way in which He bore His testimony to the worth of the Baptist himself. Questions, however, appear to have been raised about the two baptisms, which seemed to the followers of John to take from the honour due to their master. Something occurred which led the Baptist's disciples to come to him with a statement of what Jesus was doing, and what success attended Him. But John with noble humility made it an opportunity of renewing His testimony to Jesus, proclaiming his own inferiority, and declaring himself ready to decrease, while He who came from Heaven should increase. This was perhaps the loftiest point in a great career.

28. THE JOURNEY THROUGH SAMARIA
 (John iv. 1-6).—But Jesus felt it needful now to withdraw from *Judæa* for a time. The report of the many disciples He was making had reached the Pharisees. The opposition of that relentless party was beginning to rise, and our Lord did not wish His mission to be endangered by a premature collision. It is possible, too, that the circumstances of the Baptist were an additional reason for the step. John was now in peril. It was about this time indeed that he was cast into prison, as we may infer from Matt. iv. 12; Mark i. 14. What caused his imprisonment is related in simple, but vivid terms

by each of the Synoptists (Matt. xiv. 3-5 ; Mark vi. 17-20 ; Luke iii. 19, 20). It was his faithfulness in rebuking Herod Antipas for an infamous marriage with Herodias, the wife of his half-brother, Philip. The kingdom of the former Herod—Herod the Great—had now been broken up into four divisions, Judæa itself being placed directly under the Roman government, Trachonitis and other parts being given to Herod Philip (a different Philip from the one who married Herodias), the district of Abilene being committed to Lysanias as tetrarch ; and Galilee and Peraea (the territories particularly connected, the one with the active work of Jesus, the other with that of John), being assigned to this Herod Antipas. It was into one of the two countries which were ruled by this crafty, depraved prince, the hearer, but also the murderer of the Baptist, that Jesus directed His steps. Galilee might be reached from Judæa, either by travelling straight through Samaria, or by taking a longer course eastward across the Jordan and through Peraea. The state of feeling between the two countries made a Jew often choose the latter. For the Samaritans were a mixed people, to a large extent the descendants of the foreign, idolatrous colonists who were introduced into the land when the remnants of the ten tribes were carried off into captivity in Assyria. Various things had occurred to embitter the natural antipathy between the Jews and a race of this kind, of which the worst was probably the erection of a rival place of worship by the Samaritans on Mount Gerizim, one of the two heights from which the blessings and the cursings were pronounced at the entrance of ancient Israel into the promised land (Deut. xi. 29 ; Joshua viii. 30-35). But Jesus took the direct route, for a reason which is not otherwise explained than by John's statement that He "must needs go through Samaria."

29. FIRST-FRUITS IN SAMARIA (John iv. 7-42).

—A long and fatiguing journey brought Him to the neighbourhood of Sychar, a town which is now generally identified not with the ancient Sychem or Shechem, the modern Nablûs, but with a village known as Askar, a little way off, on the slope of Mount Ebal. At the foot of Gerizim, on the other side of the valley of Shechem, was the well which Jacob had dug when he bought the ground “at the hand of the children of Hamor” many centuries before our Lord’s time (Gen. xxxiii. 19). The well still remains, although it is usually without water. It has been carefully examined, especially by one explorer, who got himself let down to the very bottom, a depth of about 75 feet, in 1886. It was “about the sixth hour,” which, with John, appears to mean mid-day, that Jesus reached a spot so hallowed by memories of the distant past, and as He sat, solitary and weary, in the hottest part of the day, upon the ledge protecting the well, a woman came up to draw water. She was of the despised race of the Samaritans, and apparently from the rural parts. To her surprise this Stranger, whom she could easily recognise to be a Jew, asked her to give Him to drink, and then entered into a conversation with her with the view of making her understand that He had a better gift to offer her than any she could bestow on Him. He found, in one who seemed outwardly so unpromising, a simple and open mind, in which He was able to create the conviction of higher and holier things by what He said to her of a new water of life, and by what He drew from her about her husband. By putting His finger upon the evil of her life and showing an unexpected knowledge of what she was, He quickened the sense of sin and want in her, and led her to the discovery of what He Himself was. So to this poor, rustic member of a race from which the Jews kept jealously aloof, Jesus revealed Himself as the Messiah, and made the great declaration about God as a Spirit, and

opened the secret of a worship which was independent of all distinctions of race and place. This convert became at once a herald of the good news to others, and brought the men of her town to see Jesus for themselves. The event so absorbed the Saviour's thoughts, that when His disciples returned with the food which they had gone to purchase, He could only speak to them of meat of a higher kind which was His to eat, of the satisfaction of doing His Father's will, of the mighty harvest of souls of which the first-fruits were already seen, and of the joy which should be to all, whether sowers or reapers, who should contribute to that. Nor were the present results scanty, brief though the stay of Jesus was. Many of these Samaritans became believers, and of the best kind. For they believed not on the mere testimony of others, but because they listened to Him for themselves, and found His word commend itself as truth to their own souls.

30. MINISTRY IN GALILEE : SECOND MIRACLE AT CANA (John iv. 43-54.)—Breaking away from the gracious work among the people of Sychar, Jesus entered Galilee. There he began to preach repentance and the advent of the Kingdom of God, as we learn from Matt. iv. 17; Mark i. 14, 15. He was received with favour. But it was a favour which rested merely on the impression made by His miracles, and was too superficial to last. The first town which he visited, so far as the Gospels tell us, was Cana, and here His miraculous gift was put to proof a second time. A person in the service of the king (whom some conjecture to have been Chuza, the steward of Herod, elsewhere mentioned in the Gospel history), came from Capernaum to Cana to beseech Him to heal a son who was at the point of death. The father had a very imperfect idea of what Christ was. He seems to have thought of Him as a wonderful Healer, whose healing power at the same time was

dependent on locality. He prayed Him, therefore, to come down to Capernaum itself, as if all turned on His being on the very spot. Jesus, having this imperfection of the father's faith in view, simply bade him return home, with the assurance that his son had life restored. The man felt the power of Christ's word, and believed it. As he was on his way he was met by his servants, who gave him the glad tidings that his son had recovered, and that at the very hour at which Jesus had spoken the healing word. So the faith which had begun by resting on the witness of Christ's miracles was graciously raised to the higher faith which has its reason in Christ's words, and not only one individual but a whole house was added to the number of believers.

31. NAZARETH REVISITED (Luke iv. 16-32 ; also Matt. iv. 13-16.) — Next He passed to the home of His infancy and youth, where Mary may have been again residing. No mention is made of His disciples, and it is probable that He made this visit to Nazareth alone. When the Sabbath came round He entered the synagogue and stood up. This was a token that He wished to read in the service ; for it was the custom to read the Scriptures standing. It was the privilege of the president to call upon some one to read. But the fame of Jesus had doubtless reached Nazareth, and now secured ready compliance with His wish. The book of Isaiah was put into His hand, and the section which came to view as He unrolled the volume was the great passage in which the Messiah and His work are described in terms as definite as they are spiritual (ch. lxi. 1). On finishing the reading He sat down, as Jewish teachers were wont to do, and announced that these glorious Messianic words were fulfilled in Himself and His Ministry. It was the first direct assertion of His Messianic claims from His own lips to His own people. They received it at first with wonder, overcome by the gracious power of His

address. But their feeling changed as they thought of the carpenter's son, and contrasted His humble origin with these lofty claims. He recalled the examples which their own Scriptures recorded of God choosing other instruments for His work and other persons for His favour than those that seemed likely. But in vain. The wonder with which the men of Nazareth had listened for a time turned to a wrath so frenzied that they swept Him away to the brow of the hill on which the town stood, and would have dashed Him down the steep had not His resistless will put an awful restraint upon their fury. So He passed through them untouched, and sought a new home in Capernaum, in place of the old one which had so cruelly rejected Him. Capernaum had much to recommend it for this purpose during the most active period of our Lord's life. It was in the heart of a thick and energetic population, near the beautiful and busy lake, and with facilities for retreat to the quiet of the other side. Here, too, some of His disciples could be with Him without yet breaking with home ties. For Andrew and Simon seemed to have settled here, and perhaps James and John were also in the place, or in its immediate neighbourhood (Mark i. 29). Here, then, He did many of His miracles of grace and healing, and set about the task of preaching, obtaining large audiences in various places on the Sabbath days, when men were free, and making the power of His teaching widely felt.

32. DRAUGHT OF FISHES AND SECOND CALL OF CERTAIN DISCIPLES (Luke v. 1-11; see also Matth. iv. 18-22, Mark i. 14-20).—The series of events which have next to be noticed are placed by some before, and by others after, our Lord's second Passover. It is impossible to ascertain the precise point at which they come in. Accepting an order which has much to commend it, we may take several of them as falling a short time before

the second Passover. One of these concerned four of the men who had already been followers of Jesus. Their connection with Him hitherto had been of a free and informal kind, so that, while they were much with Him, they were not bound to constant attendance. The period had now come, however, when they were to receive a second call, which was to take them from home and former occupations, bind them more closely to His Person, and engage them in a special work. The call came in this way. As Jesus was standing by the beautiful lake one morning, and the people were hanging about in crowds curious to hear Him, He stepped into one of two boats which were at hand. He seems often to have done so, in order to speak more freely. After finishing what He had to say to His audience on the beach, He bade the owner of the boat put off further into the deep and let down his nets. The fishermen had been at work all night, and their vessel was still empty. Nevertheless they did as Jesus bade them, and so great a haul was taken that their nets began to break, and they had to get their friends in the other boat to help them. Both boats were at once filled so that they were like to sink. The partners were Simon and Andrew and James and John. The vast and unexpected draught made a profound impression upon them all. Simon fell down at the feet of the Master, and gave utterance to what was doubtless in the thoughts of the entire band. "Depart from me," he cried out, "for I am a sinful man, O Lord." The miracle made him feel as he had never felt before, that he was in contact with superhuman knowledge and power. And as was the case with Job (ch. xlii. 5, 6) and Isaiah (ch. vi. 5), the sense of being in the immediate presence of the Divine awoke the piercing conviction of his own sinfulness. But the new consciousness which the disciples now had of the distance separating them from Him, was the Lord's opportunity for

raising them to higher things, and bringing them into a closer connection with Himself. Turning to Simon, the spokesman, He quieted their fears, and declared that He called them now to quit the fisher's work in these uncertain waters for the higher work of winning souls for His Kingdom. And the call was instantly and unreservedly obeyed. What they had previously seen of Jesus must have so far prepared them for it. Yet to give up home with the associates of their youth, and the familiar occupations of their manhood, and resign themselves to a future which they could not forecast, was even for these four men at that stage in their career a decision involving no ordinary sacrifice.

33. WORKS OF HEALING AND TOUR THROUGH GALILEE (Mark i. 21-39; see also Matt. viii. 14-17; Luke iv. 31-44).—Returning to Capernaum Jesus gave many further proofs of His miraculous power, while He also continued to teach. In the synagogue itself He cured a man who was the victim of one of those mysterious forms of disease which could not be explained by mere physical causes and were accounted for by demoniacal possession. He found Peter's mother-in-law sick of an acute fever and restored her at once, and so completely that she rose and went about her household work. On the evening of that same day He healed many who were brought to Him, suffering from diverse maladies both bodily and mental. So, taking upon Himself the varied infirmities of men and bearing their ills, He fulfilled, as Matthew points out, what Isaiah said of the Suffering Servant of Jehovah (ch. liii. 4). But these varied works of love which He had been doing drove Himself again to prayer. He was followed to the solitary place, which He sought for that purpose in the early morning, by Simon and the other disciples, who would not have Him quit the gracious work for which there seemed so great an opportunity in Capernaum. But He

gave them to understand that there was need of His ministry elsewhere, and He went forth on a tour of preaching and healing in other districts of Galilee. In the numerous towns and dense population of this interesting part of the Holy Land He found His work for some time. But we are not told how long this first Galilean circuit lasted.

34. THE LEPER AND THE PARALYTIC
 (Mark i. 40-ii. 12; Luke v. 12-26; see also Matt. viii. 2-4, v. 12-26).—To this time also the narrative of the first cleansing of a leper probably belongs, although Matthew brings it in along with other things after his report of the Sermon on the Mount. The story of this man is told with detail. For leprosy was one of the most terrible of all Eastern diseases, a malady which brought with it the penalty of rigorous separation by reason of its contagious nature, and was deemed incurable by medical skill. The Mosaic Law had elaborate regulations by which the leper was bound. He was held unclean (Lev. xiii. 44-46). He had to live outside the camp or city. He had to rend his garments and go with his face covered, his hair unkempt, and crying, “Unclean, unclean!” So painful, loathsome, and hopeless a disease in the body was a fit symbol of the malady of sin in the soul, and the power which Jesus showed Himself to possess over the former was a sign of the like power which was in Him to cope with the yet greater misery of the latter. The sufferer who evoked His healing pity on this occasion approached Him in deepest reverence, and with a faith which recognized that He had the power if He only had the mind to exert it. And as the man appealed to His will, so Jesus met his faith by the simple word, “I will; be thou clean,” and the leprosy fled from him. Probably with the view of preventing the spread of expectations of signs and wonders which might divert the attention of the mass from the spiritual truth He was teaching, the Healer laid upon him an injunction to silence;

which his heart, however, was too full to keep. He charged him also to respect the legal requirements by presenting himself to the priest and making the usual offering (Lev. xiv. 2, 10, 21, 22). When he was in Capernaum again, a man so sick of the palsy that he had to be carried on his couch, was brought to Him, and as the four friends who bore him could not reach Jesus in the ordinary way on account of the crowd that filled the room and hung about the door, they climbed the outside stair which led to the top of the house and, removing part of the roof, let the patient down through the opening into His presence. Their faith was great, and Jesus honoured it by at once declaring the forgiveness of the man's sins. His words seemed blasphemous to the scribes and others about Him, who knew it to be the prerogative of God alone to forgive sins. Jesus read the unexpressed thoughts of their hearts ; and to convince them that He had the power of forgiveness, He bade the man rise and take up his bed and walk. Helpless as he had been, the paralytic arose, to the amazement of the people, and did as Jesus had said. In this great declaration, as on so many occasions, Jesus called Himself by the name of "the Son of Man"—a name recalling the terms of the eighth Psalm and the book of Daniel (ch. vii. 13). It was His own most frequent title for Himself, and expressed at once His connection with man's race and His superiority to every member of that race.

35. THE CALL OF MATTHEW (Mark ii. 13, 14 ; Luke v. 27, 28 ; see also Matt. ix. 9).—It was immediately after these events that He seems to have won another disciple in Levi, or Matthew ; for the two names clearly belong to one and the same person. This man was of the class of publicans, or tax-gatherers—a class hated by the Jews, because of their serving the Roman government in its unwelcome exactions, and because of the grinding spirit in which too commonly they used their powers.

Matthew sat by the shore of the lake, probably at the point where the great road from Damascus comes by Capernaum, looking after the customs. Jesus saw him as He passed along, and addressed His call to him as he was engaged in his ordinary business. The call was obeyed with a promptitude which suggests that Matthew must have had some previous knowledge of Jesus. But the gospels are silent as to all that preceded this instant and complete devotion of one who was taken from the unpromising circle of publicans to be disciple, apostle, and biographer of Jesus.

POINTS FOR FURTHER INQUIRY.

1. *The history of the Sanhedrin.*
 2. *The relation of the Synagogue to the Christian Church.*
 3. *The use of the title "Son of Man."*
 4. *The differences between the Miracles of the Old Testament and those of the New.*
 5. *The differences between the two Cleansings of the Temple.*
 6. *The Samaritans—their Worship and their Bible.*
 7. *The history of the Pharisees.*
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CHAPTER IV.

THE SECOND YEAR OF THE MINISTRY.

36. THE FEAST AND THE POOL OF BETH-ESDA (John v. 1-47).—The next incident which calls for special notice is the visit which John reports Jesus to have made to Jerusalem “at a feast of the Jews.” It is far from certain what feast that was. Some think it was the Feast of Purim, or Lots, which was celebrated in the month of March, and was not a Mosaic festival, but one instituted by the

Jews of the Exile to commemorate the deliverance of their nation from the fell designs of Haman in Esther's time. Others who regard it as unlikely that our Lord would go up to Jerusalem to keep a feast of this kind, which was not of Divine appointment, take it to have been the Passover itself. If so, it marks the beginning of the second year of our Lord's ministry ; and this visit (which Jesus may have made alone) is recorded because it indicates an important stage in the rising hostility of the official classes. On the north-east side of the city, and near the Temple, was a pool, called Bethesda, or House of Mercy, and much resorted to for its medicinal virtues. The narrative of the virtues of the pool should be read as in the Revised Version, which on good ancient authority omits the mention of the angel that went down to stir the waters, which, nevertheless, were of intermittent nature. Among the crowd of sufferers of many different kinds who sought shelter in the five porches, as they waited their opportunity, Jesus saw one whose malady—a malady of thirty-eight weary years' continuance—strongly appealed to His pity. He healed the man, and sent him away, carrying his bed with him. It was the Sabbath-day, and the bearing of such a burden as one's bed was held to be a breach of the Sabbath law. The clamour of the professional classes was raised against the man, and when they learned that Jesus was his Healer, they assailed Him with murderous thoughts in their hearts as a Sabbath-breaker. On this occasion, as on every other, any accusation which the Jewish leaders ventured to bring against Jesus touched nothing of a moral nature, nor any ordinance of Divine appointment, but only breaches of laws and ceremonies of purely human invention by which the Divine law was misused and overlaid. Jesus repelled their assaults in a way that only embittered them the more—by claiming to be the Son of God, and to work as His Father did. He addressed them, too, in a solemn discourse,

in which He spoke of the deep things of His own Divine Sonship and a coming Resurrection and Judgment, in which His voice should be heard. He bore at the same time a noble testimony to the Baptist, and referred them to their own Scriptures for the truth of what He affirmed of Himself.

37. PLUCKING OF THE EARS OF CORN AND HEALING OF THE WITHERED HAND (Matt. xii. 1-21; Mark ii. 23-iii. 21; Luke vi. 1-11). Other collisions occurred with the Jews. The jealous enmity of the Pharisees was fully roused now, and they easily found occasions of offence in the freedom with which Jesus made their hard, unspiritual interpretations of the Mosaic Law yield to the higher requirements of necessity and mercy. One such occasion they eagerly grasped at in something that occurred in the fields on a certain Sabbath day. It is doubtful indeed at what precise time this incident took place. For while some introduce it at this point, others think it belongs to about a year later. But the circumstances are plain. As Jesus and His disciples were passing through the fields, the latter began to pluck the ears of corn and eat them. It speaks of the straitened life they were now having, that Matthew and Luke represent them as fain to satisfy their hunger with such fare. But the Pharisees at once upbraided our Lord for allowing them to do an unlawful thing. What was there in the action that could in any sense be held to be a breach of the law? Looking to the briefer narrative of Mark, some have supposed that they were making a path for themselves through the field by plucking the corn on each side of them as they passed on, thus doing a thing which was not allowable on any day, and adding to the offence by doing it on the Sabbath. But Matthew and Luke so speak as to indicate that the offence lay in doing on the Sabbath day a thing which was lawful enough on other days. For under the ancient law any one

was at liberty to pluck the ears of corn in any field for the satisfaction of hunger (Deut. xxiii. 25). But the traditional interpretation of such passages as Exod. xvi. 22, &c., had pronounced it sinful to do so on the Sabbath. Our Lord repelled the evil charge by reminding them that there were higher laws than those of mere ritual, as appeared from what their own Scriptures told them of David and the shewbread, as well as from the liberty allowed the priests in the temple service. He recalled the great principle stated by one of their prophets (Hosea vi. 6), that mercy is better than sacrifice and the spirit better than the letter. And, in words which must have staggered them, He claimed for Himself authority to deal with the Sabbath itself as being its Lord. A second occasion of offence was found in the Synagogue, apparently that of Capernaum. He saw here a man with a "withered hand," that is, a hand which had lost its vital power, perhaps by defective circulation—a case resembling that of Jeroboam (1 Kings xiii. 4). The traditional law had made it unlawful to heal on the Sabbath day except where life was at stake. The Pharisees, therefore, watched whether He would cure this malady, and plied Him with questions on the lawfulness of such a work. But, setting before them the broad principle that it was allowable to do good at any time, whether on Sabbath or other day, He bade the man stretch forth the dead hand, and life returned to it forthwith. The miracle of mercy so exasperated the Pharisees that they sought to kill Him. With this in view they joined, too, with the Herodians, whose jealousy of one who might become a rival to the prince to whom they adhered, was also excited. Jesus seeing this, retired again to the sea-side, healing many in the multitudes that followed Him, and holding before them Isaiah's picture of the Servant of Jehovah as one who was not to strive or cry or make His voice heard in the streets (ch. xlvi. 2).

38. CHOICE OF THE TWELVE (Mark iii. 13-19 ; Luke vi. 12-16 ; see also Matt. x. 2-4).—Jesus had now a number of disciples who kept by Him more or less constantly. But the time had come for having some in a still closer relation to Him. His fame, particularly as a healer, had penetrated the land and attracted crowds, not only from Judæa and Galilee, but from the districts about Tyre and Sidon, from Peræa, from Idumæa, and other parts beyond. He felt the need of official companions and helpers. So He selected a certain number to be with Him, whom He could send forth to preach, and to whom He could give power to “heal sicknesses and to cast out devils.” Much of His attention hereafter was given to training these select men to declare the truths of His kingdom, and to carry on His work when He left earth. Above all they were designed to be witnesses of His death and resurrection. Their number was twelve, a number which occurs with significant frequency in Scripture, as in the twelve pillars of the altar erected by Moses (Exod. xxiv. 4), the twelve stones set up as a memorial of the passage of the ark through Jordan (Josh. iv. 8), the twelve stones of the high priest’s breastplate (Exod. xxviii. 21), the twelve oxen of the molten sea in the temple (1 Kings vii. 25), &c. In the present case the number had special reference no doubt to the twelve tribes of Israel. The choice of such a band was a matter of most solemn moment. Jesus felt it to be so, and prepared for it by solitary and protracted prayer. Luke tells us expressly that “he went out into the mountain to pray ; and he continued all night in prayer to God” (*Revised Version*). The mountain which was the scene of these night-long communings is not named. But evidently it was one within easy reach of Capernaum, and it is identified by some travellers with a hill of a peculiar shape, which rises into a small cone or horn at each end, and hence is known as the Horns of Hattin. After His night of prayer

He found Himself again surrounded by His disciples, and out of them He chose His Twelve Apostles. They included seven of those whom the Gospels report to have been already specially called to be His followers, namely, Andrew and his brother Simon, James and John the sons of Zebedee, Philip and Nathanael, or Bartholomew, and Matthew the publican. But along with these were Thomas, also called Didymus (a word meaning probably *twin*), the doubter, but also at last the supreme confessor of Christ (John xx. 28); James, the son of Alphaeus; Judas or Jude, the Apostle of the triple name, being apparently the same who is now called Lebbeus and Thaddeus; Simon the Cananaean (rather than *Canaanite*), a term which may mean the same as the *Zelotes*, by which he is also called, and which points to a connection which he had had with the Zealots, a band of fanatical upholders of the ancient religious system, who allowed themselves any excess in its defence; and Judas, whose surname Iscariot probably expressed the fact that he belonged to Kerioth, a town of Judah, mentioned in Joshua xiv. 25, and that he at least was not a Galilean. Jesus must have seen a special fitness in these twelve, and, in the case at least of some of them, that fitness appears clearly enough in the picture which the New Testament preserves of their character and work. It is of interest to notice that all the three lists of the Apostles give the first place to Peter, and reserve the last place for the traitor. Of certain members of the Apostolic body the sacred records have much to say. This is the case above all with Peter and John, who are the foremost figures till Paul comes upon the scene. It is also the case, though to a less extent, with James, the other son of Zebedee. But of others very little is told us. Beyond being named in the lists of the Apostles, Thomas, for example, appears only in a few passages of John's Gospel (ch. xi. 16; xiv. 5; xx. 25-29; xxi. 2). It

is much the same with Andrew (see John i. 41; Mark xiii. 3; John xii. 22); and with Philip (John i. 43 &c., vi. 5 &c., xii. 21 &c., xiv. 8, 9). Others such as Jude, James the son of Alphaeus, and Simon Zelotes, are little more than names to us.

39. THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT (Matt. v., vi., vii.; Luke vi., 17-49). The election of the Twelve was immediately followed by a great discourse on the constitution of the kingdom which He proclaimed, its relation to the old Mosaic law, the character and obligations of its subjects. It was given on the same Mount on which He had spent the night in prayer and appointed His Twelve. We have, however, two such addresses on the Kingdom of Heaven. The one in Luke differs from the one in Matthew not only in being very much shorter, but in the order and way in which some things are put. Hence some regard them as distinct discourses, delivered on different occasions, one to the people and the other to the disciples. So they speak of the one in Matthew as the Sermon on the Mount, and of the other in Luke as the Sermon on the Plain. Nor would there be anything strange in supposing that our Lord spoke of the same themes, and to a large extent in the same terms, on different occasions. On the whole, however, we have reason to regard the two as abstracts of the same discourse, prepared by the two Evangelists for different purposes. This is all the more probable that the phrase "in the plain," which occurs in Luke, may not mean more than on a level spot on the hill. Taking Matthew's report, therefore, as the fuller, we see how Jesus began with a statement of the real nature of His kingdom—a kingdom not of earthly power such as was expected, but having its true seat in the souls of men, the secret of its power being found in inward graces, and the riches which it offered consisting in things of the spirit. To belong to this kingdom meant, as He also gave it

to be understood, the certainty of having to suffer, and brought to all its subjects the call to serve the good of men, to be like salt to save the world from corruption, and like light to shine upon it with healing and beneficent example. He explained, too, how the laws of the old Kingdom of Israel were taken over into this new kingdom, and received in it their highest spiritual interpretation, and the highest possible fulfilment of the end which they were intended to serve ; how it demanded sincerity in prayer and all religious service, and counted the spirit of pretence and harsh judgment alien to it. In words which are hallowed by the name of the Lord's prayer, He taught them how to pray and what to pray for. Under a simple but striking figure, taken from the familiar processes of building, He conveyed the final lesson that nothing could stand in this kingdom but the realities of obedience to the King and His Word. This was the "Charter of the New Kingdom," given indeed in circumstances so different from the thunderings and lightnings of Mount Sinai, under which the ancient Law of Moses was proclaimed, and yet intended not to abrogate this latter, but rather to exhibit its spirit, and bring it to its highest honour and completion. It filled the hearers with astonishment, as well it might, not only for its matter, but for its manner. The principles which it expressed were so unlike the current Jewish views of divine things. The way in which it came home to the mind, too, was unlike the teaching of the Scribes. The words of Jesus had an authority in them which had been felt in those of no other teacher. They had their witness within themselves.

40. THE CENTURION'S SERVANT: THE WIDOW'S SON (Matth. viii. 5-13; Luke vii. 1-17). —On finishing the Sermon on the Mount Jesus returned to Capernaum. It was followed by fresh displays of His Divine power. One of these was in

the case of a centurion serving in the army of Herod Antipas. This man was a Gentile by birth, but a lover of the Jewish nation, so as to have become at least a proselyte of the gate, and to have built a synagogue for the people of Capernaum. If the city is correctly identified with Tell Hum, that synagogue may perhaps survive in the ruins which are still to be seen there. This devout soldier had a servant grievously sick, whom he greatly valued. In his distress he made his petition to Jesus by the hands of the grateful Jewish elders. He did it in deepest humility and simplest faith, professing himself unfit to receive Jesus under his roof, but confident also that He had but to speak the word in order to ensure such instant obedience to His will as an officer like himself was accustomed to get from the men under him. Our Lord could not resist the rare and beautiful spirit of the soldier. He healed the palsied servant, and pronounced the master's confidence in Himself greater than anything He had yet found even in Israel. So, as it has been noticed of old, two things and only two, are reported in the Gospels as drawing forth the Saviour's wonder—the unbelief of His own townsmen of Nazareth and the faith of this soldier. The incident was memorable, too, as an earnest of the harvest of souls yet to be reaped by Christ from the Gentile world. A second event of vast significance took place the day after. From Capernaum Jesus made a visit to Nain, a small town from twenty to twenty-five miles distant, attractively situated on the slope of the Little Hermon, a short way above the plain of Esdraelon, and not far off from the site of the ancient Shunem, which witnessed the raising of the child to life by Elisha. As Jesus approached the pleasant town, now sunk to a miserable village, He was confronted by a band of mourners bearing the corpse of the only son of a widowed mother to a quick burial outside the gate. The mother herself was

there, and Jesus, seeing her sorrow, first spoke the word of comfort to herself, and then, touching the bier, bade her son arise. At the word the dead man arose and began to speak, and the Life Giver delivered him to his mother—blessed foretoken of the larger restoration, when in the final resurrection the Son of Man shall re-unite the friends whom death has long severed, and give back the parent to the child and the child to the parent. A deep awe fell upon the spectators, and the fame of the miracle ran rapidly through the land. There had been no such work wrought in Israel since Elisha's day. It was the first occasion apparently on which Jesus exhibited His power over death itself. The people recognised that in Him there was before them at least a prophet, like those of the old and wondrous days of Israel.

41. THE BAPTIST'S MESSAGE; THE WOMAN THAT WAS A SINNER (Matth. xi. 2-30 ; Luke vii. 1-50).—In these days the Baptist was lying a prisoner in the gloomy fortress of Machaerus, as the Jewish historian Josephus tells us, away to the north of the Dead Sea, and on the confines of Arabia. Moved by the tidings of Jesus which penetrated even into that remote dungeon, and perplexed at once by what he heard of His mighty works, and by His delay in openly taking to Himself His Messianic Kingship, he had sent two of his disciples to our Lord with the question—"Art Thou He that should come, or look we for another?" It is not easy to say what were the precise thoughts that John expressed in that question. But it would only be too true to nature if even one of the exalted spirit of the Baptist, lying a lonely, inactive, hopeless prisoner, felt for a time the pang of doubts whether, notwithstanding all that he had formerly seen and acknowledged of the Messianic character of Jesus, One who had power even to raise the dead, and yet delayed to exert the power, either for the relief of His forerunner or for

the open vindication of His own claims, could, after all, be the Messiah that was looked for. If the question was of this kind, Jesus met the doubt by pointing to the works which He was doing, works like those deeds of mercy which prophecy itself ascribed to the Messiah (Isaiah lxi. 1-3). Then when the messengers departed, He pronounced over John, in language which haunts the ear with its music and its passion, what has been called "the most splendid eulogy ever breathed over mortal man." In this connection, too, Luke reports the affecting incident which took place while Jesus sat at table in the house of Simon the Pharisee, and which drew from Him, in the form of the simple parable of the creditor and his two debtors, the great lesson on the measure of forgiveness and the measure of love. It is uncertain where this occurred, whether in Nain, or in Capernaum, or in some other place in these parts. The sinful woman who gave so costly a proof of her penitence and love is left unnamed, it may be from feelings of delicacy; and we are not told how the great change in her mind and life was effected, which brought her thus to the feet of Jesus. Hence some have been tempted to conclude that she was Mary Magdalene, while others have gone the length of holding this woman, Mary Magdalene, and Mary of Bethany, to have been one and the same person. But this incident is not to be identified with those of a similar kind which are recorded later (Matth. xxvi. 6-13, Mark xiv. 3-9, John xii. 2-9). The circumstances are not entirely the same. The name Simon was a very common one, and the man who appears here is a Pharisee, while the Simon of the house of Bethany is "the leper." And both Mary of Bethany and Mary Magdalene appear in a character which distinguishes them quite clearly from the penitent of Luke's Gospel, who leaves behind her in the city a life of notorious evil, and comes to Jesus with no language but that of her

tears and gifts. As her guilt had been great, so her repentance was deep and piercing. The love which rose in her agonised heart was the evidence that her sins were forgiven, and Jesus sent her back into the privacy which best became her, with a word of grace, which put the seal of assurance on the sense of forgiveness within her.

42. SECOND CIRCUIT IN GALILEE (Luke viii. 1-3, 19-21, xi. 14-36 ; also Matth. xii. 22-50, Mark iii. 20-35).—Leaving Capernaum again, Jesus undertook another tour through Galilee. He was accompanied not only by the Twelve, but by a band of disciples, mentioned now for the first time. It was a select company of devoted women, who had been relieved of various maladies, and who were inspired by thankful love to minister to the wants of the Healer. Three of these are named,—Mary Magdalene, to whom the first place is often given, and who took her name apparently from Magdala, a small village at the south end of the plain of Gennesareth ; Joanna, a woman of station, the wife of Herod's steward ; and Susanna. The tour must have taken a considerable time, as it is said that He “went throughout every city and village.” But it is more than usually difficult to ascertain our Lord's course on this occasion, or to fix the events which fall within the time. The work that pressed upon Him so absorbed Him that His friends feared He was beside Himself, and sought to defend Him from Himself (Mark iii. 21). The cure of a demoniac took place probably at this crisis, although we are not told where. It led the people to ask whether this mysterious Person who had power even over demons, was not indeed the promised Son of David. But the relentless Pharisees, who were now upon His track, were driven to the impious assertion that He had this power because He was in league with the prince of the devils. Jesus refuted them by pointing to the character of His works

opposed as they obviously were to the interests of Satan's kingdom, and pronounced His solemn caution against resisting conviction, and gainsaying the Spirit of truth as the last and worst of sins,—the one sin for which, in the nature of the case, there could be no forgiveness. So when some of the same Pharisaic party thought to tempt Him into something which they might use against Him by asking of Him a sign from heaven, He set them aside with piercing warnings of the condemnation which must come upon a generation such as they were, and declared that one sign, and only one, should be given them. It was such a sign as the evil generation of the Ninevites had in the case of the prophet Jonas. As that prophet had been lost to the sight of men for three days and nights, and had been restored in a way which appealed to the senses and attested his prophetic commission, so should the Son of Man in events thus dimly indicated—the crowning events of his death and resurrection—become a sign, open to every eye, of the truth of His claims. It was also in these same days that, on hearing that Mary and His brothers were outside the house where He was discoursing and desired to see Him, He laid down the great principle that, dear as the ties of common human relationship were (and these He never disparaged, but made them only more sacred), the true bond of kinship with Him was the spirit of honour and obedience to His Father in heaven.

43. TEACHING BY PARABLES.—(Matt. xiii. 1-53; Mark iv. 1-34; Luke viii. 4-15).—In discourses already noticed Jesus had spoken to some extent in parables. But a time came in His ministry when the parable was to be adopted as His most characteristic and most efficient mode of teaching. Matthew seems to connect this with the occasion of the visit from His mother and brethren. He reports Jesus at least to have left the house, possibly the place of his usual residence in Capernaum, to

have betaken Himself to the seaside, and there to have spoken from a boat upon the lake a number of parables to a crowd listening on the shore. The parable is a story of common life, told so as to arrest attention and reflect or suggest truths of the spiritual life. It differs from the *allegory* in that the story is almost sunk in the lesson in the case of the latter ; from the *proverb*, which is a much more condensed expression of truth or duty ; from the *fable*, in which the story conveying the truth is usually an impossible one, taken from the supposed sayings and reasonings of the brute creation. All these forms of discourse are used in Scripture. The parable is not found indeed in the Old Testament, the so-called parable of Jotham being rather a fable (Judges ix. 7-15). But in the Gospels we have a very large number of parables, between thirty and forty at least, and these are given only as selections from many more (Mark iv. 33). It was a favourite method of teaching in the East. But Jesus made it a new thing by the way in which He used it. His chief object in adopting it was to make the deep things of His Kingdom clear to the minds of His hearers, and above all to His disciples. But while nothing could better open His truth to earnest minds, it could also conceal. Where there was no disposition to receive the truth, the parable kept it a dark saying, and protected it from abuse. In presenting things spiritual under a veil, it also made their way easier to acceptance. For the nature of His Kingdom was so alien to current ideas, that, in order to secure its reception, it had to be brought home to the Jewish intelligence gradually and by figure. In his thirteenth chapter, Matthew brings together a great group of Seven Parables, all illustrating different aspects of the Kingdom. He also records the explanations given of some of them by Jesus Himself in answer to the request of His disciples. The Parable of the Sower, which occupies

the first place, and is recognised as the most perfect and typical example of Parabolic teaching, deals with the different receptions given by different hearts to the Kingdom. The second exhibits the mixed character of the Kingdom as it now is, and the sifting to which it shall at last be subject. The next two set forth the law of the Kingdom's growth, both outward and inward. The fifth and sixth show how variously the Kingdom comes to men, anxiously sought by some, unexpectedly found by others. The last repeats to some extent the lesson of the second, touching in especial the end of the Kingdom. Mark adds one that is peculiar to himself, that of the seed growing secretly, through the several stages of blade, ear, full corn in the ear, and dependent for its development on something more than man's own toil can furnish.

44. THE STORM ON THE LAKE: THE GADAREN DEMONIACS (Matt. viii. 18—ix. 1; Mark iv. 35—v. 21; Luke viii. 22-40).—Jesus next crossed the lake, perhaps to escape the crowds. The voyage seems to have been suddenly thought of, and entirely unprepared for. It was evening when the boat left the shore, and worn out by the toil of the day, He fell asleep on the boatman's cushion in the stern. As He slept a violent storm swept down upon the lake. The Sea of Galilee, lying as it does some 600 feet beneath the ocean level, is exposed to sudden blasts, which gather their fury in the wide, bare tracts stretching far behind, and rush through the gorges of the hills to smite the waters at their feet. Aroused out of His deep slumber by His terrified comrades, Jesus rebuked their want of faith, and with a word silenced the tempest. This miracle, which showed that the mightiest forces of nature were in His hand, was soon followed by one of a different order. Just as He got to land on the eastern side, He was met by two demoniacs. For Matthew states expressly that there were two, although Mark and Luke men-

tion only one, perhaps the more prominent. They were of the fiercest kind, dwelling among the tombs, and so miserably maddened that one spoke of himself as possessed by devils enough to make a Roman legion. Jesus cast out the evil spirits and let them pass into a neighbouring herd of swine, which at once rushed frenzied down the steep hill sides from their feeding ground above, and perished in the sea. The restored men would have remained with Jesus. But having some reason for making His work known in these remoter parts, or seeing that it would be best for the men themselves, He bade the one who spoke go home and tell what had happened. The men of the place themselves, however, who are variously called Gadarenes, Gerasenes, and Gergesenes in the ancient copies, requested that He might quit their country. The Kingdom of God was nothing to them, if it meant the loss of their swine.

45. RAISING OF JAIRUS' DAUGHTER AND OTHER MIRACLES (Matt. ix. 10-34; see also Mark v. 22-43; Luke v. 29-39, viii. 41-56).—Leaving the Gadarenes, Jesus returned to the other side, and found new demands made upon His healing power. Levi had made a great feast, in honour of Jesus it may be, and to bring about a meeting between Him and his own old associates. As Jesus sat at meat in Levi's house, discoursing to His disciples, and many of the publican class, on a question of fasting raised by some of John's disciples, a certain Jairus, who was president of the Synagogue, approached in deepest reverence. His only daughter had just died, and he believed that if Jesus would but come and lay His hand on her, she would live again. Jesus rose to go to his help. But as He was on the way to the ruler's house, a woman who had suffered for twelve long years from a troublesome disease, crept near Him through the crowd. She did it secretly, knowing herself to be one from whom others would shrink

lest she should make them ceremonially unclean. But believing Him to be One of such power that healing virtue streamed from Him, she simply touched the hem of His garment—no doubt the fringe of blue which the Jew wore at each corner of his cloak to remind him of the Lord's commandments (Numbers xv. 38, 39). She felt at once that the blessing had come to her. Her faith was great, and Jesus sent her away, when she stood discovered before Him, in peace and cured. This interruption over, Jesus reached the house, which was now ringing with the sounds of mourning. He was laughed to scorn when He declared the maid to be asleep. But taking Peter and John and James with Him (the first occasion on which these three appear as His most select associates), He passed into the chamber of death along with the bereaved parents, laid His hand upon the maiden, and said simply, "Little maid, arise." At the tender words the damsel arose, and, in token of her perfect restoration, was commanded to eat. Thereafter Jesus healed two blind men, who were the first to hail Him openly as the son of David. He also healed a dumb demoniac.

46. VISIT TO NAZARETH AND MISSION OF THE TWELVE (Matt. ix. 35—xi. 1; also Mark vi. 1-29; Luke ix. 1-6).—About this same time Jesus paid another visit to Nazareth, as we gather from Matt. xiii. 54-58, and Mark vi. 1-6. He came this time with a fame which had filled the land. But the people were unchanged. Their persistent unbelief prevented Him from doing many mighty works among them. The important step was next taken of sending out the Twelve on a mission by themselves. They received minute instructions, and were despatched two by two. They were to keep to Jewish territory, and preach, as Jesus Himself had been preaching, repentance and the kingdom of God. Miraculous gifts were also bestowed upon them—the first time we read of such in their case.

It was a trial mission, part of their own training for future work, but also a preparing of the way for Christ Himself in these parts. During their absence He went by Himself on another tour through certain districts of Galilee. About this time, too, He received the tidings of the Baptist's death. Three of the evangelists tell the tragic story of the birthday feast, the dance of Salome, Herod's rash oath, its miserable result, and the fear of the conscience-smitten prince that Jesus might be the murdered Baptist risen from the dead (Matt. xiv. 6-12 ; Mark vi. 14-16, 21-29 ; Luke ix. 7-9.)

47. THE FIVE THOUSAND AND THE WALK UPON THE WATER (Matt. xiv. 13-36 ; Mark vi. 30-56 ; Luke ix. 10-17 ; John vi. 1-21).—Various things now made a period of quiet desirable. The Twelve returned with the report of their work, and Jesus noticed their need of rest. The tidings of His Forerunner's death pressed also upon Himself. He saw that a new period in His ministry must open, and He sought in retirement an opportunity for thought. He crossed the lake, therefore, with the disciples, and landed at Bethsaida. Different opinions are held about this town. Some think there was but one place of that name, perhaps built on both sides of the Jordan at its entrance into the lake. But it seems more probable that there were two towns of this name (a word meaning, probably, "House of Fish," or "Fish-town"), one on the west side, and another at the north-east corner of the sea. The latter was known as Bethsaida Julias, having been rebuilt by the tetrarch Philip, in honour of Julia, the daughter of Augustus. Near its site is the grassy plain of *Butaiha*, which is in all probability the scene of the incident. But even here the privacy which Jesus sought could not be got. Eager crowds, partly of pilgrims starting for the Passover, and partly of men who had run all the way round the head of the lake from the other side, met Him

when He landed. He could not but teach them and heal their sick. The day wore on and night threatened to overtake them, hungry and unprovided with food. He thought of their need, and talked of it with His disciples. Philip, whom He questioned on the subject, could only reply that two hundred pence (which might be about £7) would be all too little to purchase even a mouthful for so vast a number. Knowing their lack of means, the disciples would have had the multitude dismissed. But Jesus calmly told them to make the people sit down, and when all the five thousand were seated in an orderly way by fifties and hundreds on the pleasant grass, He took the five loaves and two fishes, which formed all the provisions at His command, and lo ! as He broke and gave to the disciples to distribute, the food multiplied till all were satisfied. So ample, indeed, was the supply, that twelve baskets were filled with the fragments. The people being then sent away, Jesus sought the solitary hill-top for prayer. He had done so at an earlier crisis in His ministry, and He felt the need again at this other great turning point. In order to secure perfect privacy, He bade His disciples take ship for the other side. They were so reluctant to leave Him that He had to put some pressure upon them. The wind was against them, and the sea was so heavy, that, after toiling most of the night, they were little more than half way over at dawn. When they were in dire distress, Jesus, who had watched them from the solitary height, came to their help, walking to them upon the treacherous waves. They shrank in terror as from a spectre, till the well-known voice assured them. Then Peter, in his impetuous way, cried out for leave to come to Him, if it was indeed his Lord, and, getting the invitation, plunged at once into the sea. But terror overcame his faith, and he would have sunk had not Jesus caught him. So strange a proof of Christ's power over nature, following the

stupendous miracle of the Feeding, drew from those in the ship the confession that He was the Son of God.

POINTS FOR FURTHER INQUIRY.

1. *The use of the word Apostle in the New Testament.*
 2. *Points of difference between the Anointing in Luke vii. and that in John xii.*
 3. *Character of the Baptist.*
 4. *The various women bearing the name of Mary in the Gospels.*
 5. *How the Fourth Gospel differs from the first three in the use of the Parable.*
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CHAPTER V.

THE THIRD YEAR OF THE MINISTRY.

48. **DISCOURSE IN CAPERNAUM** (John vi. 22—vii. 1). The last year of His ministry was now to open. He was again in Capernaum, whither also many of those who had seen the miracle of the Loaves had returned. He entered the Synagogue, and, understanding their carnal ideas, tried to lift them to higher thoughts of Himself and their own need. But when He spoke of Himself as the Bread from Heaven, and of their need of a dependence on Himself, so vital as to be like an eating of His flesh, His words were an offence to them. So many, even of His disciples, abandoned Him now, that, as if prepared for defection everywhere, He turned to the Twelve with the question, “ Will ye also go away ? ” He received from Peter, in name of the rest, the memorable reply which meant that they at least had found a life in His words which forbade them to think of leaving Him for any other. The same

Apostle's confession, "We have believed, and know that Thou art the Holy One of God" (as we should read it with the Revised Version), was a relief to the mind of his Master. Yet it suggested, at the same moment, the dark anticipation of treachery even among the Twelve. And from this time forebodings of suffering increase. The Passover was nigh, as John tells us—ch. vi. 4—when these things happened. Jesus, however, did not go up to it, but remained in Galilee, for He knew that the Jewish leaders were bent upon His death (John vii. 1). Up to the time of the Baptist's death and the Feeding of the Five Thousand, His popularity had been rising. But with the mass it had no solid foundation. Many fell away, and the enmity of the ruling classes became fiercer. So, throughout the third year of His ministry, which opened with this Passover, He changed His methods of action, keeping more aloof from the crowd, devoting Himself more to His genuine disciples, instructing the Twelve in the great truths about His Person and His Work, and looking forward steadily to His death.

49. THE SYROPHENICIAN WOMAN : THE FOUR THOUSAND (Matt. xv. 1-38 ; Mark vii. 1—viii. 9).—At the beginning of His last year Scribes and Pharisees were again upon Him from Jerusalem. In defending His disciples against these men's charges, He exposed anew their perversions of the commandments of God by their own vain traditions. But, longing yet for the quiet which He failed to get in Bethsaida, He travelled with the Twelve north-eastwards to the borders of Tyre and Sidon, and in all probability (though some have a difficulty about this) entered heathen territory. At least He gained a heathen convert in these parts—a woman of the Syrian Phoenicians, who exhibited a faith most persevering and ingenious in finding even in apparent scorn new pleas for pressing her appeal. This woman of Canaan, who was content to take even the dog's

place if she could but secure health for her tormented daughter, and whose faith triumphed over repeated denial, has a remarkable place in the Gospel history as one of the few Gentiles won by Jesus during His earthly life. As He had sought these remote parts with a view to repose, this is the one mighty work He seems to have done there. Leaving the Gentile frontiers He journeyed back to the Sea of Galilee, by the way of Decapolis—a district so called from its embracing *ten cities*, which seem to have had, for the most part, a heathen population and a special system of government. Here He healed the deaf mute—a miracle remarkable for the gradual method of its performance—as well as many sufferers of other kinds. These wonderful deeds had kept a multitude of people around Him for three whole days, and lest they should go away fainting, He fed them as He had fed others before. This miracle of the four thousand resembles that of the five thousand. Yet they differ, not only in the numbers fed, and in the loaves, but also in the fragments gathered. These filled seven baskets on this occasion, and it is interesting to notice that the baskets were different in the two cases. In the former it was the small hand basket; in the latter it was the large basket or hamper, like the one in which Paul was let down from the wall of Damascus (Acts ix. 25).

50. THE GREAT CONFESSION (Matt. xv. 39—xvi. 28; Mark viii. 13—ix. 1; Luke ix. 18-27).—Jesus came next to the parts about Magdala (which seems now to be represented by a wretched village at the south end of the plain of Gennesareth), or, as Mark puts it, Dalmanutha. Here He had to meet a combined demand from the Pharisees and Sadducees for a sign from heaven. Then crossing once more to the other side, He warned His disciples against the hypocrisy and worldliness of the Jewish parties, healed a blind man at Bethsaida, and so came to Caesarea Philippi, a town also anciently known as

Paneas (now Banias) from its connection with the worship of Pan. In this romantic neighbourhood, at the foot of Hermon and by the main source of the Jordan, Jesus drew from Peter the confession that He was the Christ, the Son of the living God—a confession going far beyond all that the disciples had yet alleged, and expressing such a conviction of His true nature that He declares it could have come to Peter only by heavenly revelation. With this, too, He connected the great promise of what Peter was to be to the Church—its strength and, in some sense (a sense, however, not limited to Peter only), its foundation. Now that the disciples had been brought the length which Peter's confession implied, Jesus saw that He could speak more plainly of His approaching Passion. From this time He made His sufferings, death, and resurrection, frequent themes of discourse. Yet when He began to speak thus, even Peter felt it so strange that he went so far as to remonstrate with his Lord, and brought on himself the sharp rebuke, "Get thee behind Me, Satan." It was as if Jesus saw in Peter's rash speech a renewal of the Satanic temptation in the wilderness to snatch success by worldly means.

51. THE TRANSFIGURATION (Matt. xvii. 1-13; Mark ix. 2-13; Luke ix. 28-36).—Some six days after these events, He again sought the solitude of the hills. The "high mountain" which He is reported to have ascended has been identified by tradition with Tabor, a round-topped height at the eastern end of the Plain of Esdraelon. But the apparent difficulty of finding perfect seclusion there, its distance from the district in which He last appeared, and other circumstances, point to a different locality. So it is generally supposed now that it was to some peak of the mighty snow-capped Hermon that Jesus took the select three, Peter, and James, and John, to be witnesses of one of the most wonderful events in His history. The other disciples

were left in some village at the foot, and Jesus betook Himself to prayer. As He prayed a mighty change came over Him. His face and His robes shone with the whitest and most dazzling light. It seemed as if a glory hidden within Him streamed forth and lit up His person and His attire. He was joined, too, by two mysterious companions, Moses and Elias, representatives of the law and the prophets. The chosen three, left alone while Jesus tarried long in prayer, had fallen asleep, nature yielding to weariness and to the mystery of the situation. Roused from their slumber by the portents about them, they gazed in hushed amazement on the scene, and listened in awe to what was said of the decease their Lord was to accomplish at Jerusalem. As these mysterious visitors from the unseen world seemed about to depart, Peter cried out, as if he would fain have all remain, for leave to erect tabernacles for Moses, Elias, and his Lord. But as he spoke the strange words, which expressed at once fear and the sense that it could not but be good to be there, a bright cloud overshadowed all, and a voice was heard attesting Christ's Divine Sonship. The terror-stricken three fell on their faces, and when they arose at the gracious touch of Jesus, the glory was gone, and their Master was seen alone. This marvellous event was meant to strengthen their faith, which had been sorely tried by what had been said of the death of their Lord. It gave them a new insight into the Divine glory of the Son of Man, new convictions of the reality of the spiritual world, and an earnest of His return hereafter. We can gather in some measure what it was to the apostles from the way in which the foremost of the three speaks of it in one of his Epistles (2 Pet. i. 16-18).

52. EVENTS FOLLOWING THE TRANSFIGURATION (Matt. xvii. 14-27; Mark ix. 14-33; Luke ix. 37-45).—Jesus charged the three not to speak of His Transfiguration till after His Resurrection. As

they descended He met their question, suggested no doubt by the sight of Elias in the vision, about the coming of Elijah. When they rejoined the multitude at the foot of the Mount, He healed a terrible case of lunacy and demoniac possession, which had baffled the power of His disciples. Then quitting the neighbourhood of Hermon, He came again into Galilee, discoursing, as He went, of His own approaching Passion, in terms which His followers understood not, but which filled them with fear. Reaching Capernaum once more He provided in the form of a piece of money in the mouth of a fish, a certain tax which had been demanded of Peter. On the ground of Exod. xxx. 13, &c., it had been ordained, after the return from the Captivity, that every Jewish man of twenty years old and upwards should pay half a shekel annually towards the expenses of the Temple service. The coin which Jesus provided was the Greek *stater*, which might be about 2s. 8d. of our money, and exactly met the tax for two persons, Peter and Jesus Himself.

53. QUESTIONS OF RANK, FORGIVENESS, &c. (Matt. xviii. 1-35; Mark ix. 35-50; Luke ix. 46-50).—At the same time, and probably in the same locality, Jesus dealt with various questions which arose among His disciples. They had keen disputings, prompted perhaps by the privileged position of Peter and James and John, about who should be greatest in the new kingdom. Jesus rebuked their false estimates by setting before them a little child as the pattern of the greatness which His kingdom honoured. John, too, had a difficulty of his own. He and his fellows had refused countenance to one who, though not a professed follower of Jesus, was casting out devils in His name. What Jesus had said about the little child, or some other word of His, now made John doubt whether they had done right in that. Jesus told them not to interfere with such an one. The time might be when they would

have to act on a different principle. But the sifting time had not yet come, and the danger was great of putting anything in the way of those who were in any measure inclined to His kingdom. Nor was Peter without his question. Christ's words about forgiveness seemed to him exaggerated, and he asked Him to say plainly how often one was to pardon an offender. Jesus replied that practically there was no limit to the gracious duty of forgiveness, and with this view spoke the great parable of the Two Debtors — a parable remarkable for the contrast between the debt (equal to about £2,500,000) so freely cancelled to the king's servant, and the sum (amounting only to about £2, 3s. 6d.) which the same servant so mercilessly refused to remit to another.

54. FEAST OF TABERNACLES (John vii. 2—viii. 10).—For more than a year Jesus had confined His ministry to Galilee and the parts beyond. He had avoided Jerusalem, not venturing to it even at the Passover. There had been much work to overtake,—too much to risk a premature termination of His ministry by putting Himself in the hands of His enemies in the stronghold of their power. But the time had now come when He could visit the sacred city once more. The occasion was the Feast of Tabernacles, a joyous festival which was held about six months after Passover, and commemorated the days when Israel, ransomed from Egypt, entered on the free, desert life. His brethren, who did not yet believe in Him, would have had Him go up, and He declined. To have gone up, as they advised, with the concourse at the opening of the Feast, would have put Him in circumstances of peril. But when the Feast was well on He went up quietly by Himself, and was thus able to mingle with the people, and teach, even in the Temple, without at once arresting the evil eye of the official classes. And so He continued till the last day of the Feast

was reached. It has been doubted whether this was the seventh day or the eighth. In Deut. xvi. 13 and Num. xxix. 12 seven days of the Feast are mentioned. But it is generally understood now that there was an eighth day, to which indeed other passages seem to refer (Lev. xxiii. 35-39; Neh. viii. 18). On this day, which is called "the great day" of the Feast, as being that on which the solemn return was made to the Temple from the booths in which the people had lodged for the previous seven days, Jesus took His stand in public, and, with a voice which expressed intense feeling, "cried" to the people of their spiritual need and the satisfaction offered in Himself. He spoke of this under the figures of thirst and water. It is supposed that this may have been suggested by what was seen during the Feast. For it was the custom each morning, at least during the seven days, for the priest to fetch water in a golden pitcher from the spring of Siloam and pour it into two vessels on the west side of the altar. But, whether He had this in view or not, the imagery which He used was natural and familiar. It set the people a thinking who He could be, and feeling ran so high that some would have done Him mischief. The rulers also sent officers now to seize Him. But the men returned, confessing themselves unable to lay hands on one who spake as never man spake; and in the council itself He found in Nicodemus at least one to plead for justice. So He was suffered to leave unharmed, and betook Himself to the Mount of Olives. It is in this connection, too, that John gives the narrative of His gracious dealing with the adulteress, and of the conviction with which her accusers were seized under His words. The old manuscripts make it very doubtful, however, whether it was originally introduced here. But from the same chapter we see that Jesus had another opportunity, perhaps when He returned next day to the Temple, of speaking to the people. We learn,

too, that the claims which He made for Himself as the light of the world, and as one whose day Abraham rejoiced to see, while they led many to believe, so roused the hostile party that, in sudden rage, they would have stoned Him. But He mysteriously delivered Himself out of their hands.

55. HEALING OF THE BLIND MAN (John ix. 1—x. 21).—It is uncertain how long Jesus remained in Jerusalem after the Feast of Tabernacles. The fierce rage which had been excited against Him would probably make His stay brief. But it is peculiarly difficult to ascertain the exact order of events at this point. It is probable that the healing of the man blind from his birth, which took place on the Sabbath, belongs to this time. It is reported at uncommon length by John because of its effects, not only on the man himself and his parents, but on the Pharisees. The contrast between the hardness of heart exhibited in the attempt made by the Pharisees to revile Jesus, and the ready belief of the healed man, drew from Him the discourse about Himself as the Good Shepherd who knows His sheep, even as the Father knows Him—a discourse which caused again a great division of opinion among the Jews. But it would seem that quitting Jerusalem, where feeling ran so high, He made another visit, probably of brief duration, to Galilee.

56. MISSION OF THE SEVENTY (Luke ix. 51—x. 24).—He saw that the time for His return to His Father was nigh (for this is what Luke means by His being “received up”), and that He must go up to Jerusalem to meet the crisis of His life. He felt that He was leaving Galilee for the last time, and so Luke tells us that He “set His face steadfastly,” as if it cost Him a great effort, “to go to Jerusalem.” His way was marked by various incidents of great interest. He sent messengers before Him into a certain Samaritan village.

The people, fired with the bitter Samaritan hatred of the Jew, or seeing nothing but an impostor in a Messiah whose face was toward Jerusalem, refused to let Him enter. James and John would have punished their rude inhospitality by calling down fire from heaven upon them, as Elijah had done (2 Kings i. 9-14). But Jesus taught them how different was the spirit of His mission. As they passed to another village, a certain man met Him with profuse professions of being ready to follow Him everywhere. If the narrative of Matthew (viii. 19, &c.) refers to the same occasion, the man was a Scribe, and Jesus, guessing how superficial his profession was, put the test of His own poverty and homelessness before him. To others who came to Him in a half-hearted way, He spoke words showing that in His service the conventional duties and proprieties of life must give place to things spiritual, and that nothing will suffice but an undivided devotion. But He made a larger preparation for the journey to Jerusalem by selecting seventy out of the number of His disciples, and sending them two by two before Him, with full instructions about the course they were to take, and with healing gifts. Entering into the different villages and towns which lay on the way, they became heralds of Christ's approach, and in due time returned to report the wonderful power, even over demons, which had attended their mission. Jesus rejoiced at their success, and saw in it the token of Satan's overthrow, and thanked His Father for the revelation of heavenly things which He had made to the simple. The selection of *seventy* may have had some reference to the body of elders appointed to assist Moses (Num. xi. 16). With less probability, some find in it an allusion to the *Gentile* nations, as these may be reckoned to the number of seventy in the ancient table of nations (Gen. x.). We are not told the exact course taken by the Seventy. There is

little reason, however, to suppose that they penetrated into heathen territory: They kept, in all probability, within Galilee, Peraea, and Judæa, although they may also have entered Samaria. But their mission is one of the great peculiarities of this last journey from Galilee. It meant that, though He saw His end so near, He was to make one more appeal, and that of the most solemn kind, to the people.

57. MINISTRY IN PERÆA (Luke x. 25-37 ; xi. 1-13 ; Mark x. 17-31 ; Matt. xix. 16-30).—Following the Seventy, Jesus Himself had come into the territory of Peræa. Here, as formerly in Galilee, He spoke of the spiritual nature of His kingdom, and of what He was to men. His words arrested wide attention, and people came asking Him about the “life” and the other gifts He had to offer. It may have been now that the following incidents took place, though they are referred by some to another period :—A lawyer approached Him with a question about what he should do to inherit eternal life. The question was put in a spirit of curiosity perhaps rather than out of deep feeling. Jesus told him of the absolute necessity of love to God and to one’s neighbour, and spoke the great parable of the good Samaritan in illustration of what He meant by our neighbour. Another, a rich youth, came with a similar question, but in a more earnest spirit. He had striven to keep the Divine commandments in the literal way acknowledged by the Jews, and still he felt a need. Jesus, to whom the earnest spirit of the young man was so grateful that Mark tells us “He loved him,” sought to bring him to higher ideas of goodness, and proposed the test of giving up his wealth. But the youth turned away in sadness from a demand which was too much for him, and Jesus then spoke His solemn warnings against the snares of riches. It was these sayings, or others of a like kind, on some similar occasion, that drew from

Peter the strange question about the reward of those who, like himself, had given up their all,—a question which led Jesus to hold forth the vision of a vast return, yet not of the kind which Peter thought of at the time, for all who sacrificed earthly things for Him. Another disciple asked him to teach them to pray as the Baptist had taught his disciples. The man was induced to make such a request, perhaps by the sight of Jesus Himself in prayer. In reply, Jesus set before him the words already employed in the Sermon on the Mount as a sufficient form and model ; and by the parable of the “Friend at Midnight,” as well as by direct promise, He assured him of the certainty of an answer to prayer uttered in the spirit of that great form.

58. INCIDENTS OF THE JOURNEY (Luke xi. 27—xiii. 35).—What He did during this journey made a deep impression upon the people. Mothers brought their children that He might put His hands on them, and He lifted them up in His arms and blessed them, and declared the Kingdom of God to be theirs (Matt. xix. 13-15, Mark x. 13-16, Luke xviii. 15-17). But there were others who thought differently of Him, and He found cause enough to sift the professions of some and to rebuke others. So it was with a woman who, in a moment of thoughtless enthusiasm, cried out from the crowd that the mother of such a Son was blessed indeed (Luke xi. 27, 28). So it was, too, with a Pharisee with whom He dined, and who showed surprise that He did not wash before dinner, according to the scrupulous ways of his sect (Luke xi. 37-44). So, too, with a lawyer whom He rebuked for the blind unspirituality of his class (Luke xi. 45-54). In like manner, when the people were so eager to hear Him that they trod upon each other. He denounced the hypocrisy of the Pharisees. When one of the company appealed to Him to settle a question of property with a brother, He had to

rebuke the spirit of covetousness, and exposed its perilous madness by the parable of the Rich Fool whose soul was required of him in the pride of his wealth. A question from Peter led Him to enforce the need of watchful and faithful service in view of the Coming of the Judge (Luke xii. 41-58); and the fate of certain Galileans who had probably been concerned in some hasty rising against the Roman power, and had been put to death by Pilate in circumstances of uncommon horror, gave Him occasion to speak of the corrupt state of the Jewish nation, and to point the lesson of their doom by the parable of the Fig Tree (Luke xiii. 1-9). Luke, who brings all these incidents together, records in the same connection the healing of the woman who was bent and bowed with an ailment of eighteen years' standing; the rebuke which he administered to the hypocrisy of the ruler of the synagogue on that occasion; the answer He gave to the question about the number of the saved; the way in which he met the crafty counsel of certain Pharisees who tried to effect his departure by the terror of Herod; and the pathetic lament over the sin and coming desolation of Jerusalem (ch. xiii. 10-35). But, as with many other incidents, it is impossible to say whether these occurred during His Peræan journey or at other stages of His ministry.

59. THE FEAST OF DEDICATION (John x. 22-42; Luke x. 38-42).—He reached Jerusalem in time to be present at the Feast of Dedication. This was a joyous Festival held on the Jewish month which corresponded to part of our November and December. It lasted eight days, and commemorated the purification of the Temple by the patriot Judas Maccabeus, after its defilement by the worship of Jupiter, which had been set up in it by Antiochus Epiphanes, the oppressor of the Jews. It was perhaps as he neared the sacred city on this occasion, though the date of the incident is uncertain, that

Jesus paid the visit, which Luke records, to the home of Martha and Mary. The village is left unnamed by Luke. But it can be no other than Bethany, which lay on the slope of Mount Olivet, about two miles distant from Jerusalem. The village, which must be sacred to the world's end by reason of its associations with our Lord, still retains a memorial of the miracle wrought there in its name, *El Azariyeh* (from *Lazarus*), but is now said to be a poor Moslem hamlet of some forty rude stone houses. There, as He saw Martha's distraction in the cares of the house and hospitality, and heard her hasty complaint against the sister who sat at His feet and gave undivided attention to His words, Jesus declared Mary to have chosen the good part which could not be taken away from her. So He has left with us for ever the two-fold lesson that the things of the eternal life are to be preferred to every other interest, and that if the choice must be made at all between the two great forms of the religious life, active service and the meditative prayerfulness that listens and receives, the latter is the better. Entering Jerusalem itself He joined the people who were walking according to their habit at that season in a cloister or arcade, known as Solomon's Porch, which may have extended along the eastern side of the Temple. The Jewish leaders gathered round Him, and asked Him to say plainly whether He was the Messiah or not. He referred them to His works in proof of the fact. But when He went on to claim to be one with God, and to be able to give eternal life, they rose against Him and would have stoned Him. Hence He left Jerusalem and retired to Bethabara (or Bethany), beyond Jordan. In this safer sphere, so full of the memories of the Baptist's work, He made many converts. But we have nothing but the briefest record of His ministry there. His stay cannot have been long. But as a period of between three and four months separated

the Feast of Dedication from the next Passover, it may have extended over a couple of months.

60. HEALING OF THE DROPSICAL MAN : VARIOUS PARABLES (Luke xiv.—xvii. 10).—An important series of events and discourses, the exact place of which is difficult to determine, may perhaps belong to the times of His journeyings between Jerusalem and the Jordan. A Pharisee of distinction, probably a member of the Sanhedrim or the president of a synagogue, had Jesus at meat in his house on a Sabbath. A man afflicted with dropsy was also here—a strange addition to the company. We are not told how he came to be present—whether as a casual spectator, or led by his own faith in Jesus as a Healer, or brought by the Pharisees on purpose to see whether our Lord would heal him on the Sabbath. Jesus not only healed him, but silenced the Pharisees, and spoke certain parables to teach the great lessons of humility and unselfishness. As the hardness of the Jewish heart made itself more apparent, He used plainer terms, as in the parable of the Excuses, in warning them of the danger of setting aside the claims of His Kingdom, and of what it cost to become really His. But the classes who were despised by the Pharisees, did not keep aloof from Him. And in their behoof He spoke the great parables of the Lost Sheep, the Lost Coin, and the Prodigal Son, which set forth in matchless tenderness how God in His love seeks the outcast and the lost. So He justified at the same time His own readiness to receive such and eat with them. In other parables addressed to His disciples, He expressed other truths which it was needful for them to hear. In that of the *Unjust Steward*, He taught them that a wise self-interest pointed to the necessity of a faithful use of every earthly trust ; in that of the *Rich Man and Lazarus*, He unveiled something of the future and its righteous recompences. And to the Twelve themselves when they prayed

Him to increase their faith (the only instance indeed which the Gospels record of a direct request made to Him by the *Apostles*), He spoke of the service to which they were bound, and of what faith, were it only real, could make them capable of doing.

61. RAISING OF LAZARUS AND RETREAT TO EPHRAIM (John xi. 1-54).—Our Lord's stay in these parts was broken in upon by painful tidings. The shadow of death was over the dear home of Bethany. Lazarus, who has been termed "the one intimate personal friend whom Jesus possessed outside the circle of His Apostles," was grievously sick, and an appeal came from the stricken sisters. But, instead of hastening at once to their relief, He remained calmly where He was. The delay, which must have seemed so strange to Martha and Mary, may have been meant as a test of their faith, or it may have been due simply to the necessity of finishing the work which He had in hand near the Jordan. After two days, however, He proposed to go up to Judæa. The disciples reminded Him of His danger, but, seeing His determination, Thomas, sure that it could but end in death, and yet prepared to risk all with Him, made the declaration, so true to his character, "Let us also go, that we may die with him." The journey to Bethany was one of about twenty miles, and by the time that Jesus reached it, His friend had been four days dead. On the news of the Lord's approach, Mary remained motionless, wrapt in her grief. But the active Martha at once went forth and met Him with words half reproachful, yet full of faith in His power. Jesus assured her that her brother should rise, and when she took Him to refer only to the resurrection at the last day, He presented Himself to her as the Resurrection and the Life, in whose presence there was no might in death. Then, as John tells us in words of unapproachable simplicity, majesty, and tenderness, Jesus

being joined by Mary in her tears, Himself, too, weeping and troubled in spirit, came to the grave, bade the stone which sealed it be lifted, and praying to His Father, cried with a loud voice, "Lazarus, come forth." At the word the dead man rose, was loosed from his grave clothes, and was given back to his home. It was the mightiest of all Christ's miracles, the most startling witness to His Divine commission and His true relation to God. The news speedily came to the ears of the Jewish rulers. The Council was hastily convened. The members were agitated and uncertain what to do. Their fear was lest, under the impression of this stupendous event, the people might gather round Jesus and attempt something which would bring down the strong hand of Rome upon them, and strip them of the last semblance of national existence. Caiaphas, the high priest for the year, brought the debate to a close, by proposing that Jesus should be got rid off, rather than that the nation itself should perish. It was a piece of crafty, cruel policy. Yet it meant more than Caiaphas himself understood. For in the Divine love and wisdom there was a need that this One Man should become a sacrifice in order to save His race from death. It was the climax of the guilty hostility of the Jews. Attempts had previously been made to put Jesus to death as a Sabbath-breaker and a blasphemer; the Pharisees and Herodians had leagued together for the same object; the Council had already resolved to excommunicate any who should confess Him as the Christ; and officers had been sent to seize Him (John v. 16-18; Mark iii. 6; John ix. 22; vii. 32). But now the Jewish authorities, sitting in formal council, finally rejected Him and decreed His death. Jesus, knowing the designs of the Sanhedrim, withdrew once more from Jerusalem, and sought shelter in Ephraim, a small town which may be the same as

the Ophrah of the Old Testament (Joshua xviii. 23 ; 1 Sam. xiii. 17). In this secluded place, lying about four miles north-east of Bethel, and about sixteen from Jerusalem, He would find opportunity for preparing Himself by prayer, and His disciples by further instruction, for what was now so near at hand.

62. ON THE WAY TO JERUSALEM (Luke xvii. 11—xviii. 14; also Luke xviii. 31-34 ; Matt. xx. 1-28 ; Mark x. 32-45).—Leaving Ephraim after a stay of perhaps a month, He began His final journey to Jerusalem. He pressed on as if His thoughts were fixed wholly on the end. His disciples followed Him in awe. It may be that He spoke to them of other matters, such as the question of divorce, reported by Matthew (xix. 3-12) and Mark (x. 2-12). But the chief theme of His discourse was His approaching death and resurrection. His course seems to have been by the borders of Galilee and Samaria. To this period, therefore, we may perhaps refer the cleansing of the Ten Lepers, of whom only one, and he a Samaritan, returned to give thanks for his recovery ; His reply to the question put by the Pharisees about His kingdom and the time of its coming ; and the parable of the Importunate Widow, by which He taught the lesson of perseverance in prayer (Luke xvii. 11—xviii. 1-8). To the same period probably belong the parable of the Pharisee and the Publican, by which he rebuked the Jewish self-righteousness (Luke xviii. 9-14), and the parable of the Labourers in the Vineyard (although others connect it immediately with the case of the rich young man), in which He explained that the principle of final reward in His kingdom was not mere length of service, but the character of the servant. As He proceeded on His eventful journey, He seems to have fallen in with numbers of Galilean pilgrims on their way to the Passover. It may have been in these circumstances,

when there were so many yet about Him, and expectations of great things yet filled their minds, that the ambitious request, which roused the indignation of the rest of the Twelve, was made by James and John (as Matthew tells us, through their mother, Salome), that the highest places in His kingdom should be theirs. He promised them high distinction, but it was the distinction of suffering (Matt. xx. 20-28 ; Mark x. 35-45).

63. AT JERICHO (Matt. xx. 29-34 ; Mark x. 46-52 ; Luke xviii. 35—xix. 28).—So He moved onwards, with a crowd of pilgrims about Him, till Jericho was reached. This ancient city, the fertile “city of palm-trees,” which was taken by Joshua, and with which so many events of the Old Testament history are associated, lay in the deep Jordan valley, about fifteen miles from Jerusalem. The village of *Eriha*, or the *'Ain-es-Sultan* (Elisha’s fountain), may still mark its site. Here He came upon two blind men, sitting by the gate, begging. They hailed Him as the Son of David, and cried out for mercy and healing. The people would have had them be silent. But Jesus stopped, called them to Him, and gave them their request. The men followed Him, and were joined by the spectators in giving glory to God. Mark speaks of only one man, and names him Bartimæus, the son of Timæus. The other is omitted, perhaps as being the less prominent. Luke reports the miracle as taking place when Jesus entered Jericho ; Matthew and Mark, when He was leaving the city. It is difficult for us now to harmonise these accounts. Some, however, suppose that the petition was made when Jesus entered, and repeated and answered as He passed out of the city. Here, too, a certain Zacchæus, who seems to have been the head of the custom-house officials, having some interest in Jesus, or out of curiosity, got up into a sycamore fig-tree (a kind of tree with thick low-set branches easy to climb) in order to get a sight of

Him as He passed. Arrested by the unexpected call which our Lord addressed to Him, he came down and received Him into his house. Like so many of his class, he had an evil repute with the people ; but Jesus, seeing his genuine penitence, declared him a true son of Abraham, and an heir of the salvation which had come that day to his house. These gracious deeds were followed by the parable of the Pounds, by which He set forth the truth that the rewards of His kingdom, of which the minds of many were yet so full, were to be had only after faithful work, and only in proportion to the measure of the work.

64. THE ANOINTING AT BETHANY (Matt. xxvi. 6-13 ; Mark xiv. 3-9 ; John xi. 55—xii. 11).—Pilgrims now began to gather in Jerusalem, and the question was eagerly debated among them whether Jesus would come to the Passover. The priests and Pharisees were also expectant and ready to seize Him (John xi. 55-57). In due time He left Jericho, and made His way through the bleak and difficult country between it and Jerusalem. But on nearing the city He let the mass of pilgrims pass on, and turned aside at Bethany to rest in the friendly and familiar home. It was now six days from the Passover, and on His arrival, or the day after, a supper was prepared for Him in the house of Simon, a restored leper, a kinsman or intimate friend of the family of Bethany. Lazarus was there too, and Martha served. As they sat at table, Mary came suddenly behind the couch on which her Lord reclined, with a vase or jar of precious spikenard in her hands, and, breaking it, poured its contents over the sacred Head, and with her hair wiped the Feet, which, as John shows us, were also bedewed with the same fragrant unguent. It was the act of a moment, done at the magic bidding of love. It was a costly offering, its money value being about £10, or about as much as the whole year's wage of a day labourer in

these times. The disciples, headed by the avaricious Judas, murmured against it as waste. But Jesus counted the gift honourable for the love which was in it, and for the time at which it was offered, and declared that it should be an imperishable memorial of the hand that gave it. It has been greatly disputed how often Jesus was thus anointed, and whether Matthew and Mark deal with the same occasion as John. The most probable view is that there were two distinct anointings—one recorded by Luke (ch. vii.), and a second to which the other Gospels refer. This latter, however, is supposed by some not to have taken place till the fourth day of Passion Week. It was from this time probably that Judas, finally giving up all idea of gain or honour by remaining with Christ, began to meditate his treachery. The Jewish rulers, too, now sought the life of Lazarus as well as that of his Restorer.

65. ENTRY INTO JERUSALEM; FIRST DAY OF PASSION WEEK—SUNDAY (Matt. xxi. 1-17; Mark xi. 1-11; Luke xix. 29-44; John xii. 12-19).

—The day on which Jesus came to Bethany was either the Friday or the Saturday. On the Sunday He went on to Jerusalem, joined on the way not only by His disciples, but by pilgrims who had remained outside the city, and by others who came out from it in order to meet Him. When Bethphage ("house of figs"), a small village a little way off from Bethany, came in view, He sent two of His disciples into it to fetch an ass and a colt. When the animals were brought He mounted the colt, one never yet ridden by man, and continued His progress. By this act He fulfilled what had been said of old by Zechariah the prophet, about the coming of Zion's King (ch. ix. 9), although this was not understood by the people at the time. As He moved on, an enthusiasm seized the crowd, so that they strewed their garments and palm branches before Him in the way, and hailed Him as King in

the words of the 118th Psalm. There were some who would have had Him silence the acclaims of His disciples, but He replied that if He did so the very stones would cry out. Yet, when He crossed the Kedron and came upon the city in its beauty, the thought of its awful fate rose upon Him and melted Him to tears. By entering Jerusalem in this way He presented Himself before the nation as the Messiah. By-and-bye He disengaged Himself from the excited crowd; and, after visiting the Temple, He retired, when evening came on, to Bethany. Throughout these closing days His practice was to seek rest at eventide on the Mount of Olives, as Luke says (ch. xxi. 37), or in Bethany itself, as Matthew and Mark put it more expressly.

66. SECOND DAY OF PASSION WEEK—
MONDAY (Matt. xxi. 12-22; Mark xi. 12-26; Luke xix. 45-48).—Next morning He was early on His way to the city with His disciples. Passing a fig-tree, and finding on it only leaves, which could do nothing to satisfy His hunger, He declared that no fruit should ever grow on it more. It withered at His word, and so completely, indeed, that when they came by it next morning the disciples found it dried up from the very roots. The blasting of this tree was a symbolical act. Israel was the tree, and the Lord's act was a token of the fate impending on the nation that had nothing to show to its God but the leaves of a barren profession. Entering the city He went to the Temple, where He healed the blind and the lame, and was hailed as Son of David by the children. But He found His Father's house again profaned, as it had been when He purged it at the beginning of His ministry. The old traffic had been suffered to resume its place, and the desecration which now prevailed was even greater than the former. On the preceding evening He had done nothing beyond looking round the sacred place. Now, as He marked the fraudulent commerce which

had turned it into a den of thieves, He purged it again as thoroughly as before, none venturing to withstand Him. So a second time He asserted its holiness and His own authority over it, and again retired to Bethany.

67. THIRD DAY OF PASSION WEEK—TUESDAY (Matt. xxi. 20—xxv. 46; Mark xi. 20—xiii. 37; Luke xx. 1—xxi. 38; John xii. 20-50).—The next day was crowded with events. Returning by the fig tree, He made it the occasion of a lesson on faith to the disciples. Entering the Temple He was met by a band of chief priests and elders, who demanded of Him His authority for acting as He did. He set their demand aside by a question which they feared to answer about John's baptism. Next He spoke certain parables—that of the Two Sons, contrasting the failure of the professed people of God with the attitude of the publicans and outcasts; that of the Wicked Husbandmen, exhibiting the terrible picture of Israel's guilt and judgment; and that of the Marriage Feast, which told the doom of those who abused grace. His enemies, in all their different sections—Pharisees, Sadducees, Herodians, and others—now united in a policy to ensnare Him by dangerous questions. The Pharisees and the Herodians asked His opinion on the lawfulness of paying tribute, thinking to entrap Him into a reply which might either cost Him the hold He had upon the people, or bring Him under the hand of the Romans. The Sadducees put a petty question about the Resurrection, and a lawyer came asking him to say which of the commandments was the greatest. But He met all these entangling questions with a wisdom which silenced His enemies. He in turn proposed a question to the Pharisees about David's son and David's lord, which they could not answer, and followed this up by warnings and woes against their class. Seating Himself by the treasure-chests, which were set in the women's court in the Temple for the

receipt of offerings, He commended the gift of the widow. It may have been now, too, that the desire of certain Greeks to see Him was communicated to Him by Philip and Andrew. They were genuine Gentiles, who had come up to the Feast, and had made their wish known to Philip. It was a significant event, opening up to Jesus the vision of mighty ingatherings from the Gentile world. But the vision of the sacrifice through which alone that could be attained also rose before Him, and His soul became deeply troubled. Then a voice, such as had been heard before at His Baptism and His Transfiguration, came to strengthen Him, and He went on to speak of what His death would be to men and to Satan. As He left the Temple, the words of a disciple in admiration of the structure led Him to foretell its utter destruction. Then seating Himself on the Mount of Olives He spoke to Peter and James and John and Andrew of the things which should be before His Second Coming. By the great parables of the Virgins and the Talents He enforced again the need of constant watchfulness and faithfulness, and in further sayings opened the scenes and exhibited the principles of the Final Judgment. He left the Temple then for the last time.

68. FOURTH DAY OF PASSION WEEK—WEDNESDAY (Matt. xxvi. 1-16 ; Mark xiv. 1-11 ; Luke xxii. 1-6).—The next day was passed in quiet in Bethany. That was needful for Himself and for His disciples. We know not how He spent it ; but we can scarcely err in taking it to have been devoted largely to prayer, and to the giving of further counsel to His followers. His enemies, too, were active. The Jewish authorities met in the house of Caiaphas, and consulted how to seize Him. Judas, also, into whom Satan had entered, made his bargain with the chief priests to betray His Master for the pitiful sum of thirty pieces of silver, the market price of a slave, equal to perhaps £3, 15s. of our money (Zech. xi. 12).

69. FIFTH DAY OF PASSION WEEK—
THURSDAY (Matt. xxvi. 17-35; Mark xiv. 12-26;
Luke xxii. 7-38; John xiii.—xvii).—Jesus now
directed Peter and John to go into the city and
make all necessary preparations for the Paschal
Feast. He gave them a sign by which to know the
house He had in view, and they went and found all
as He had indicated. He followed with the rest,
and at evening He sat down with the Twelve in the
guest-chamber. A contention somehow had arisen
among the disciples as to who should be reckoned chief.
When the first cup of wine was handed to them, He
taught them, both by word and by Himself washing
their feet, that service is true greatness. To their
exceeding distress He told them that one of them
should betray Him, and, on Peter beckoning to
John to ask who it could be, He intimated that
Judas was the man. When the traitor went out, as
he immediately did into the night, Jesus spoke of
Himself and His Father being glorified by His
death, and gave them His new commandment, the
“Eleventh Commandment” of His Kingdom, that
they should love one another as He had loved them.
As Peter broke in with protestations, that he would
lay down his life for Him, and never be offended in
Him, He warned him of the sifting to which Satan
would soon subject him, and the fall which would
humble him. Then He solemnly instituted the
Supper, which retains the sacred name of the *Lord's Supper*, with its simple elements of bread and wine,
as a lasting memorial of His death. Finally, He
comforted the Twelve by three priceless discourses,
which we owe to John, on peace, the Vine and its
branches, the gift of the Spirit, and also by His inter-
cessory prayer for their guidance and unity (John
xvii). It should be noticed that the first three Gospels
speak of this holy Supper as the stated Paschal meal
while John uses terms which seem to imply that it
was eaten the day before the Passover. On this de-

pends the question, whether our Lord was crucified on the 14th day of the Jewish month Nisan, and so on the very day on which the Paschal lamb was slain, or on the 15th. The difficulty is a very serious one. But the probability is that the Supper was the Paschal meal, and that Jesus died on the 15th Nisan. The apparent difference between John and the other Gospels has been explained in various ways, but is due, perhaps, to a method peculiar to John.

70. THE AGONY AND THE ARREST (Matt. xxvi. 36-56 ; Mark xiv. 32-52 ; Luke xxii. 39-53 ; John xviii. 1-12).—While yet in the Supper room, they had sung a hymn, as we learn from Matt. xxvi. 30, Mark xiv. 26. This was probably part of the series of Psalms known as the Great Hallel, viz., cxiii.-cxviii., which were used at the Paschal Supper, and of which cxiii., cxiv. were usually sung during the meal. This being finished, and when it was now near midnight, they left the room and, crossing the Kedron, came to Gethsemane (*i.e.*, “oil-press”), a garden at the foot of Mount Olivet. In or near the site of that sacred enclosure travellers have seen some venerable olive trees, of which one has well said that “their gnarled trunks and scanty foliage will always be regarded as the most affecting of the sacred memories in or about Jerusalem.” We know not what was said by the way, unless it be that a renewed protestation by Peter drew from Jesus a more explicit prediction of His denials. But leaving the rest by themselves, He took Peter, and James and John with Him into the garden, and withdrawing even from these three into a more secluded part, He was overcome by an agony so intense that His sweat became as great drops of blood, and He spoke of His soul as “exceeding sorrowful even unto death.” It was a final conflict between nature and the doing of the Father’s will at the cost of the Cross. The prayers which broke

from His lips, the repeated visits to the slumbering three, the craving for their sympathy, the presence of the angel to strengthen Him, indicated the tides of strong and conflicting emotion that rose upon His soul. But it is impossible for us to tell all that this agony meant to one who knew Himself to have a relation to the sin of the world, such as no man could have. It ended in victory, and the calm acceptance of the Father's will. Coming then a third time to the three, and wakening them out of the sleep into which sorrow and weariness had cast them, He had instantly to meet a body of hostile men, who broke in upon the dark silence of the garden with their torches and weapons. They were headed by Judas, whose treacherous kiss was to indicate which of the number was Jesus. Peter, rashly undertaking his Master's defence, smote off the right ear of Malchus, the High-priest's servant, with his sword. Our Lord healed the wound, and, though a simple word from Him had so arrested His captors that they had fallen to the ground before Him, calmly gave Himself into their hands. He went to His trial alone, forsaken for the time by His dismayed disciples. Only one nameless young man, whom some take to have been Mark himself, followed Him for a space. But he, too, speedily fled in such terror, that he even left behind him the garment which he had flung about him in his haste to reach the scene.

71. THE TRIAL (Matt. xxvi. 57—xxvii. 30; Mark xiv. 53—xv. 19; Luke xxii. 54—xxiii. 25; John xviii. 1—xix. 15.—He was taken first to Annas, a former High Priest, who had been deposed a good many years before. His son-in-law, Caiaphas, was High Priest for the year, but Annas seems to have acted as deputy or to have had some recognised position and influence. From Annas He was sent bound to Caiaphas. Meanwhile, Peter and John, forgetting their first terror, had come after their Master, and

in virtue of some acquaintance which John had with the High Priest or his household, had got within the palace gate. In the open court there Peter's thrice repeated denial of his Lord occurred, while the Trial proceeded within. Caiaphas made small pretence to keep by law. Men were present who had been induced to offer false witness. An attempt was made to use against Him the words which He spoke at the beginning of His ministry about destroying the Temple ; but as this was too little for his purpose, Caiaphas tried to make Jesus His own accuser by asking Him whether He claimed to be the Son of God. On hearing Him reply that it was so, Caiaphas rent his clothes, declared Him a blasphemer, and with the consent of all the Council, pronounced Him guilty of death. The session was then suspended till morning, Jesus meanwhile being left exposed to cruel insults from His enemies, who blindfolded Him, smote Him, and spat upon Him. In the morning the Council met again in full muster, and completed the evil work by a more formal sentence. They had to meet this second time also in order to deliberate on the carrying out of the sentence. Knowing that the power to execute it was not in their hands they resolved to take their prisoner before the Roman governor, who usually resided in Cæsarea, but was now in Jerusalem to look after order during the Feast. Pontius Pilate heard Him charged with making Himself a king, a rival to Cæsar. But learning from Himself that the kingdom which He claimed was only a kingdom of truth, the rough Roman, who cared for none of these things, and had no liking for the Jews, found nothing in the accusation. Wishful to get rid of the responsibilities of the case, he hit upon the device of sending Jesus to Herod, the ruler of the land with which He had been so closely connected, who was then in Jerusalem. Herod, who had long desired to see Jesus, also failed to find anything

criminal in Him, and contented himself with sending Him back, derisively clad in a splendid robe. A long-standing enmity between Pilate and Herod was ended, but nothing else was effected. So the trouble was thrust back upon the Roman, and a lengthened struggle began between his sense of justice and his dread of the Jews. His fears, aided by a dream which his wife had, as well as by what Christ said of His power, were also enlisted on the side of justice. So he made a series of efforts to get Him set free, offering to chastise Him, or to release Him according to the custom of the Feast, washing his own hands before the Jews in token of his wish to be held clear of guilt in the matter, appealing to their pity by the sight of his prisoner bleeding from the crown of thorns and clad in imperial purple in mockery of His royal pretensions, and finally presenting Him to them as their King. But the Jews refused to let Pilate escape. They chose Barabbas, a murderer, rather than Jesus ; they accused Pilate himself of being untrue to Cæsar ; they cried for the crucifixion of Jesus, and took the guilt of His blood upon their own heads. At last the governor gave up the struggle, and resigned Him to their will. It seems, too, that at this juncture, when he saw his former Master finally doomed to death, Judas was smitten with remorse, returned the pieces of silver, and finally strangled himself (Matt. xxvii. 3-5 ; Acts i. 18).

72. THE CRUCIFIXION : SIXTH DAY OF PASSION WEEK (Matt. xxvii. 31-66 ; Mark xv. 20-47 ; Luke xxiii. 26-56 ; John xix. 16-42).—Jesus was at once delivered over to the Roman soldiery. His own garments were put upon Him again, and He was led forth to death. Roman custom made Him bear His own cross. But the burden was too much for Him, worn out as He now was by the scourging and all the horrors of the night. So they laid it upon a certain Simon who was met probably as they went

out by the city gate, a man of whom we know nothing but that he belonged to Cyrene, and had two sons, Alexander and Rufus, who are named, perhaps, because they were afterwards known as members of the Church. A crowd accompanied Him, in which there were some who felt for Him ; at least certain women of Jerusalem, who could even weep for Him. At last the place of death was reached, Golgotha, the place of a Skull, or, Calvary, as it is also called, from a Latin equivalent ; and the cross was set up with the Saviour nailed to it, and with an inscription in three languages, Roman, Greek, and Hebrew, affixed to it. On either side of Him, too, stood a cross with a robber hanging on it. So He was left amid the jeers of priests, and scribes, and elders, the revilings of passers-by, the mockery of soldiers, and the railing of at least one of His comrades in agony. Thus had He to die a death of the most protracted and excruciating torment. Of the people there was none with Him (Isaiah lxiii. 3) save the disciples, the mother and the holy women at some distance. It was the third hour, or 9 A.M., when He was crucified (Mark xv. 25), having refused the stupefying cup of wine and myrrh (Mark xv. 23) usually offered to those who were so to suffer. The first cry that came from Him in His pain was a prayer for the forgiveness of those who inflicted it (Luke xxiii. 34). The second was a promise of Paradise to the penitent robber by His side. The third, if we follow an order in these Seven cries from the Cross which is probable, if not certain, was to commit His mother to John's care. At the sixth hour, when the sun was at its height, a dread darkness descended, which lasted till the ninth hour, and a more awful gloom invaded the Saviour's soul, which drew from Him the cry to God —“ Why hast Thou forsaken me ? ”—a cry expressing the sense of clouded favour with God where there was no sense of sin. Then, coming out of the awful

depths of this mysterious sense of forsakenness, He cried, "I thirst," and received the relief offered by one of the guard. At once, on tasting the sour wine so given, He uttered the loud cry which meant that His life and His work were now finished (John xix. 30), and with His last voice commanding His Spirit to His Father (Luke xxiii. 46), He gave up the ghost. It was on Friday the 15th Nisan, in the year A.D. 30, that the Saviour, amid the quaking of the earth, the rending of the great curtain of the Temple, the opening of the graves, and the confessions of the centurion on duty during the time, endured this crucifixion for the world's sin. To make sure that the crucified should be taken down and buried before the Sabbath entered, Pilate gave orders to break their legs. But when the soldiers came to Jesus, they saw that He was dead already. Only, to make sure, one of them thrust his spear into the sacred side, and there came forth blood and water—a fact which has been taken by some to show that the physical cause of our Lord's death was rupture of the heart. In ordinary course, our Lord should have been buried in a place set apart for criminals. But Joseph of Arimathea, a member of the Council, and a secret disciple, obtained the body from Pilate, and, with the help of Nicodemus, gave it honourable burial in a new tomb in his own garden.—It should be noticed that John (xix. 14) states that it was "about the sixth hour" when Pilate condemned our Lord. It is one of the great chronological questions of the Gospels how to harmonise this with the notes of time given by the other Evangelists.

73. THE RESURRECTION (Matt. xxviii. ; Mark xvi. 1-18 ; Luke xxiv. 1-49 ; John xxi.). The disciples were in deepest despondency. But the rulers of the Jews were exultant, and lest any attempt should be made by the disciples to remove the body and so make it appear as if the prediction of His rising were fulfilled, they got a military

watch set upon the tomb. So all remained silent until dark was about to pass into dawn, when suddenly an earthquake shock was felt, an angel rolled away the stone which had been placed upon the sepulchre, and Jesus arose. No eye of man saw the act of His resurrection, for the keepers were prostrate in terror. But after He had risen, He was seen by so many credible witnesses of different kinds and at different times, that His resurrection is among the most surely established facts of all history. It is not easy to determine the precise order of the various appearances of the risen Lord as they are told by the gospels and by Paul (1 Cor. xv. 4-7). But the following is a very probable order. The first persons who learned the fact that He had risen seem to have been the holy women who had followed him from Galilee—Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James and Joses, Salome, and others. Coming very early in the morning of the first Lord's Day to embalm the sacred body, they noticed that the stone was rolled away, and the grave empty. One of them, Mary Magdalene, sped off at once with the wonderful news to the Eleven. The others pressed forward and saw an angel, or more than one, who bade them go and tell the disciples that their risen Lord was to go before them into Galilee. They left with the message, but ere they could arrive, the Apostles had heard Mary. Peter and John ran to make sure whether her report was true, and finding it so, hastened back to their fellows. Mary had followed them, and she remained by the tomb when they left. As she lingered there, absorbed by her sorrow and only half regardful even of the angels, she saw a figure which she took to be the gardener ; but the familiar address, *Mary!* showed her it was Jesus. So it was to this woman that the risen Lord first appeared. Then, as we learn from Luke and Paul, He showed Himself to Peter, in an interview of which we have no record. Later in the same day,

as two disciples, Cleopas and one un-named, were on their way to Emmaus, a little village near Jerusalem, He joined them, and opened up the Scriptures to them in their sadness, and entered their house. As He left them they recognised that it was the Lord, and set out with the glad news to Jerusalem. On the evening of the same day, when the Apostles were together, all but Thomas who was absent in despondency, Jesus suddenly appeared among them and showed His hands and side to convince them that it was He, and breathed on them and gave them His peace. So closed the first Lord's day—a day of joy unutterable to His own. The second Lord's day saw him again among the Apostles, bringing Thomas out of doubt into glorious faith. Thereafter, when they had returned to Galilee, He appeared to seven of them whom He found fishing again in the familiar lake, and publicly restored Peter. From Paul, too, we learn that He was seen of a large company of five hundred brethren together, and of James separately (1 Cor. xv. 6, 7). Matthew also reports an appearance to the Eleven in Galilee (xxviii. 16), which some reckon the same with that to the five hundred, while others regard it as distinct.

74. THE ASCENSION (Mark xvi. 19, 20 ; Luke xxiv. 50-53 ; Acts i. 1-12).—For forty days the Risen Lord remained on earth, instructing His disciples in the things of His kingdom. Then the time came for His return to His Father. Meeting His disciples, He led them out to the Mount of Olives, at the point where Bethany appears ; and lifting up His hands to bless them, He rose from their sight in a cloud which received Him. His work on earth being finished, God “hath highly exalted Him, and given Him a name which is above every name ; that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth ; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus

Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father" (Phil. ii. 9-11). And the New Testament teaches us that He is now our "Advocate with the Father" (1 John iii. 1), and that the heavens must receive Him till He returns to judge the world and bring in the Resurrection of the dead.

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